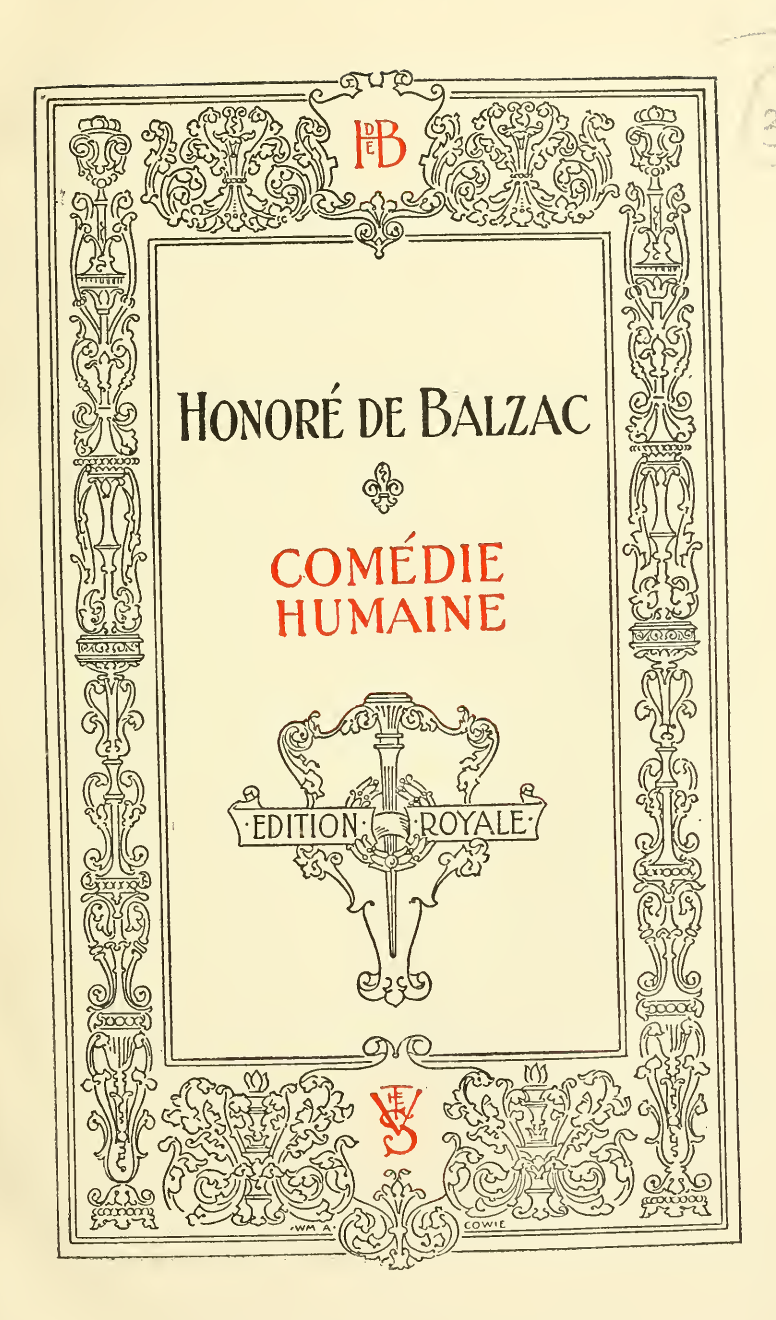
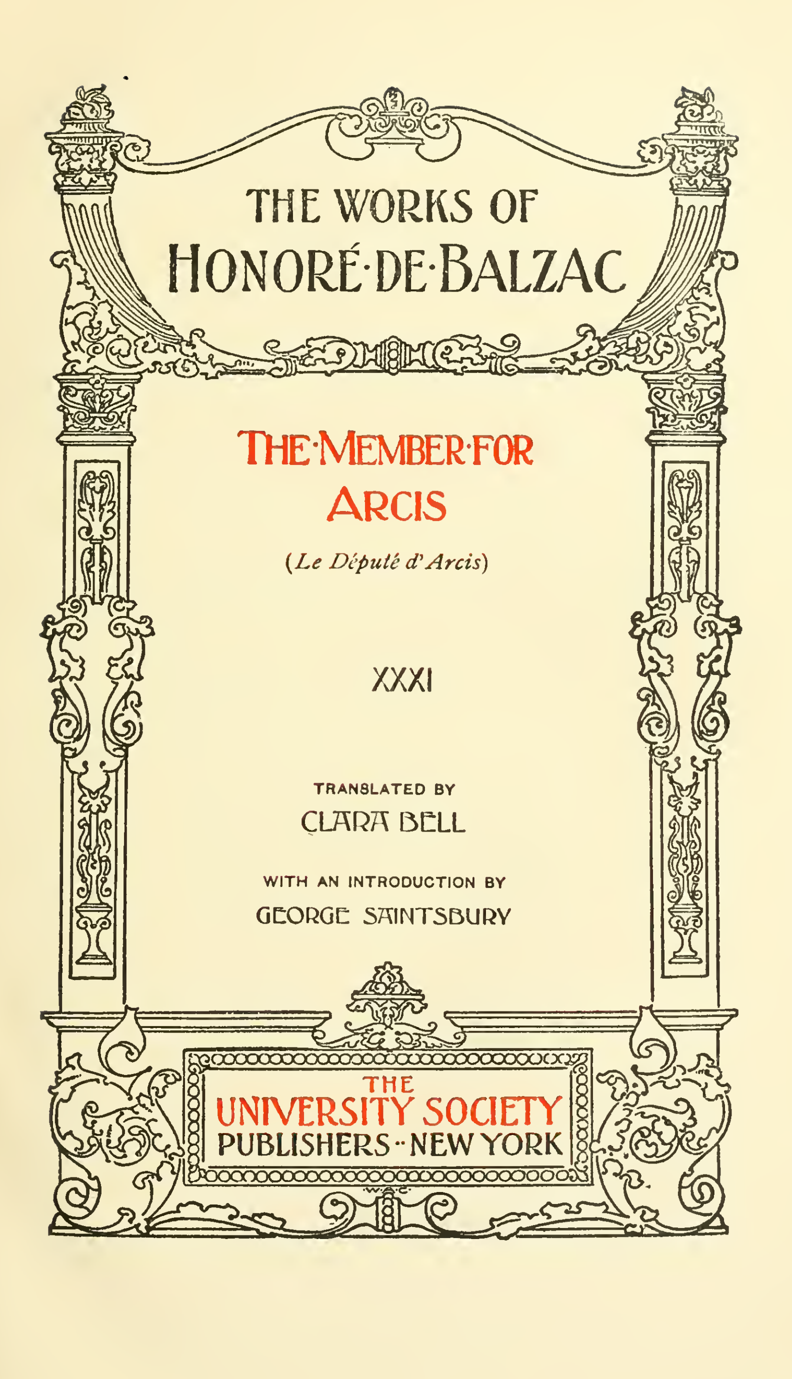

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THE WORKS OF

HONORÉ·DE·BALZAC

THE·MEMBER·FOR ARCIS

(*Le Député d'Arcis*)

XXXI

TRANSLATED BY

CLARA BELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

THE UNIVERSITY SOCIETY
PUBLISHERS · NEW YORK



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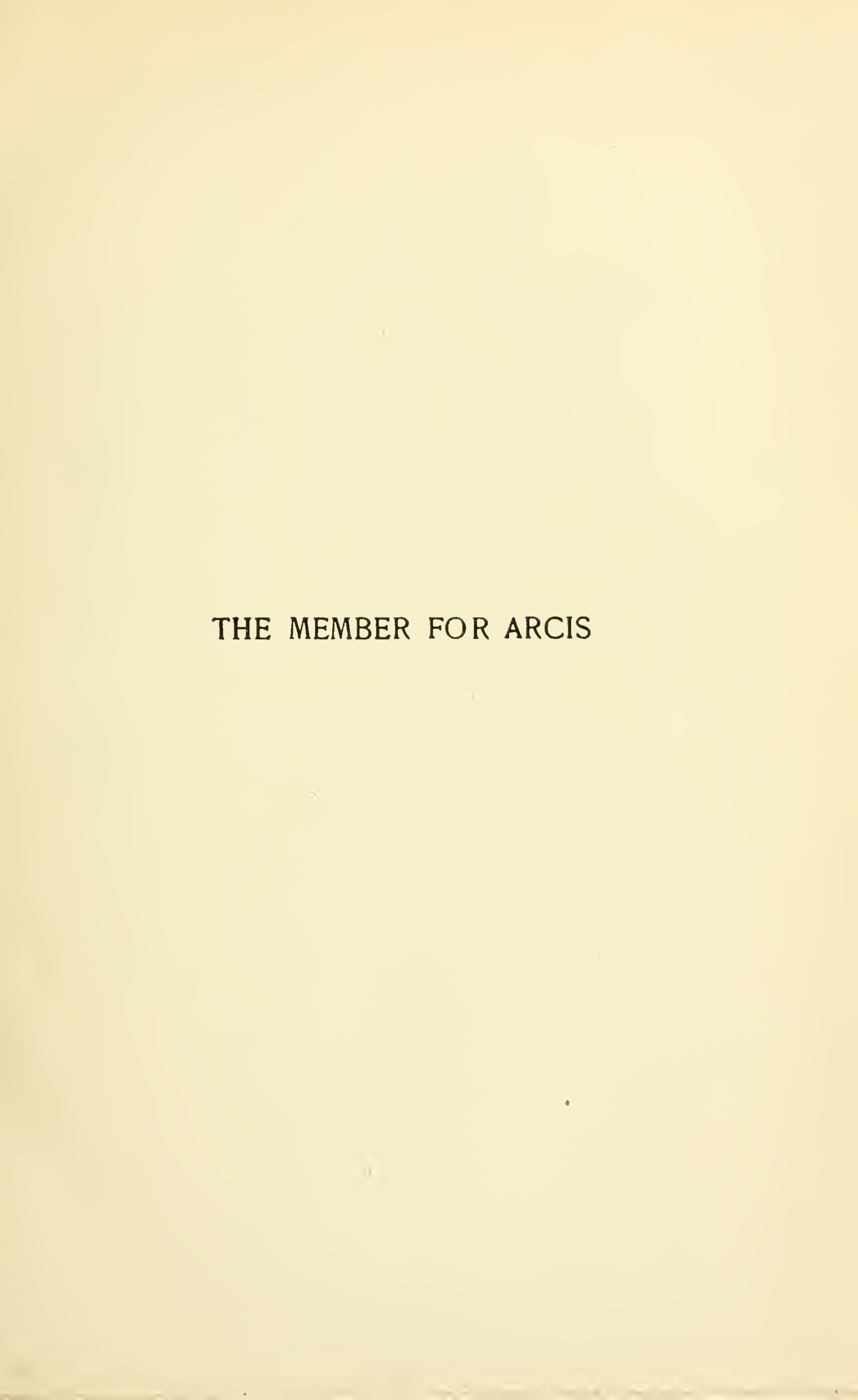
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THE MEMBER FOR ARCIS

INTRODUCTION

Le Député d'Arcis, like the still less generally known *Les Petits Bourgeois,* stands on a rather different footing from the rest of Balzac's work. Both were posthumous, and both, having been left unfinished, were completed by the author's friend, Charles Rabou. Rabou is not much known nowadays as a man of letters; he must not be confused with the writer Hippolyte Babou, the friend of Baudelaire, the reputed inventor of the title *Fleurs du Mal,* and the author of some very acute articles in the great collection of Crepet's *Poètes Français.* But he figures pretty frequently in association of one kind or another with Balzac, and would appear to have been thoroughly imbued with the scheme and spirit of the *Comédie.* At the same time, it does not appear that even the indefatigable and most competent M. de Lovenjoul is perfectly certain where Balzac's labors end and those of Rabou begin.

It would seem, however (and certainly internal evidence has nothing to say on the other side), that the severance, or rather the junction, must have taken place somewhere about the point where, after the introduction of Maxime de Trailles, the interest suddenly shifts altogether from the folk of Arcis and the conduct of their election to the hitherto unknown Comte de Sallenauve. It would, no doubt, be possible, and even easy, to discover in Balzac's undoubted work—for instance, in *Le Curé de Village* and *Illusions Perdues*—instances of shiftings of interest nearly as abrupt and of

changes in the main centre of the story nearly as decided. Nor is it possible, considering the weakness of constructive finish which always marked Balzac, to rule out offhand the substitution, after an unusually lively and business-like beginning, of the nearly always frigid scheme of letters, topped up with a conclusion in which, with very doubtful art, as many personages of the *Comédie,* and even direct references to as many of its books as possible, are dragged in. But it is nearly as possible certain that he would never have left things in such a condition, and I do not even think that he would ever have arranged them in quite the same state, even as an experiment.

The book belongs to the Champenois or Arcis-sur-Aube series, which is so brilliantly opened by *Une Ténébreuse Affaire.* It is curious and worth notice, as showing the conscientious fashion in which Balzac always set about his mature work, that though his provincial stories are taken from parts of France widely distant from one another, the selection is by no means haphazard, and arranges itself with ease into groups corresponding to certain haunts or sojourns of the author. There is the Loire group, furnished by his youthful remembrances of Tours and Saumur, and by later ones down to the Breton coast. There is the group of which Alençon and the Breton-Norman frontiers are the field, and the scenery of which was furnished by early visits of which we know little, but the fact of the existence of which is of the first importance, as having given birth to the *Chouans,* and so to the whole *Comédie* in a way. There is the Angoumois-Limousin group, for which he informed himself during his frequent visits to the Carraud family. And lastly, there is one of rather wider extent, and not connected with so definite

a centre, but including the Morvan, Upper Burgundy, and part of Champagne, which seems to have been commended to him by his stay at Saché and other places. This was his latest set of studies, and to this *Le Député d'Arcis* of course belongs. To round off the subject, it is noteworthy that no part of the coast except a little in the north, with the remarkable exceptions of the scenes of *La Recherche de l'Absolu* and one or two others; nothing in the greater part of Brittany and Normandy; nothing in Guienne, Gascony, Languedoc, Provence, or Dauphiné, seems to have attracted him. Yet some of these scenes—and with some of them he had meddled in the Days of Ignorance—are the most tempting of any in France to the romancer, and his abstention from them is one of the clearest proofs of his resolve to speak only of that he did know.

The certainly genuine part of the present book is, as certainly, not below anything save his very best work. It belongs, indeed, to the most minute and "meticulous" part of that work, not to the bolder and more ambitious side. There is no Goriot, no Eugénie Grandet, not even any Corentin or Vautrin, hardly so much as a Rastignac about it. But the good little people of Arcis-sur-Aube are represented "in their natural," as Balzac's great compatriot would have said, with extraordinary felicity and force. The electoral meeting in Madame Marion's house is certainly one of the best things in the whole *Comédie* for completeness within its own limits, and none of the personages, official or other, can be said to suffer from that touch of exaggeration which, to some tastes, interferes with the more celebrated and perhaps more generally attractive delineations of Parisian journalism in *Illusions Perdues* and similar books. In fact, in what he wrote

of *Le Député d'Arcis,* Balzac seems to have had personal knowledge to go upon, without any personal grievances to revenge or any personal crazes to enforce. The latter, it is true, often prompted his sublimest work; but the former frequently helped to produce his least successful. In *Le Député d'Arcis* he is at the happy mean. It is not necessary to give an elaborate bibliography of it, for, as has been said, only the "Election" part is certainly Balzac's. This appeared in a newspaper, *L'Union Monarchique,* for April and May 1847.

G. S.

THE MEMBER FOR ARCIS

PART I.

THE ELECTION.

Before entering on a study of a country election, I need hardly say that the town of Arcis-sur-Aube was not the scene of the events to be related. The district of Arcis votes at Bar-sur-Aube, which is fifteen leagues away from Arcis; so there is no member for Arcis in the Chamber of Deputies. The amenities demanded by the history of contemporary manners require this precaution. It is perhaps an ingenious notion to describe one town as the setting for a drama played out in another; indeed, the plan has been already adopted in the course of this Human Comedy, in spite of the drawback that it often makes the frame as elaborate as the picture.

Towards the end of April 1839, at about ten in the morning, a strange appearance was presented by Madame Marion's drawing-room—the lady was the widow of a revenue collector in the department of the Aube. Nothing remained in it of all the furniture but the window curtains, the chimney hangings and ornaments, the chandelier, and the tea-table. The Aubusson carpet, taken up a fortnight sooner than was necessary, encumbered the balcony steps, and the parquet had been energetically rubbed without looking any the brighter.

This was a sort of domestic forecast of the coming elections, for which preparations were being made over the whole face of the country. Things are sometimes as humorous as men. This is an argument in favor of the occult sciences.

An old man-servant, attached to Colonel Giguet, Madame Marion's brother, had just finished sweeping away the dust that had lodged between the boards in the course of the winter. The housemaid and cook, with a nimble zeal that showed as much enthusiasm as devotion, were bringing down all the chairs in the house and piling them in the garden. It must be explained that the trees already displayed large leaves, between which the sky smiled cloudless. Spring breezes and May sunshine allowed of the glass doors and windows being thrown open from the drawing-room, a room longer than it was wide.

The old lady, giving her orders to the two women, desired them to place the chairs in four rows with a space of about three feet between. In a few minutes there were ten chairs across the rows, a medley of various patterns; a line of chairs was placed along the wall in front of the windows. At the end of the room opposite the forty chairs Madame Marion placed three armchairs behind the tea-table, which she covered with a green cloth, and on it placed a bell.

Old Colonel Giguet appeared on the scene of the fray just as it had occurred to his sister that she might fill up the recess on each side of the chimney-place by bringing in two benches from the ante-room, in spite of the baldness of the velvet, which had seen four-and-twenty years' service.

"We can seat seventy persons," said she, with exultation.

"God send us seventy friends!" replied the Colonel.

"If, after receiving all the society of Arcis-sur-Aube every evening for twenty-four years, even one of our usual visitors should fail us—well!" said the old lady in a threatening tone.

"Come," said the Colonel with a shrug, as he interrupted his sister, "I can name ten who cannot—who ought not to come. To begin with," said he, counting on his fingers: "Antonin Goulard, the sous-préfet, for one; the public prosecutor, Frédéric Marest, for another; Monsieur Olivier Vinet,

his deputy, three; Monsieur Martener, the examining judge, four; the justice of the peace——"

"But I am not so silly," the old lady interrupted in her turn, "as to expect that men who hold appointments should attend a meeting of which the purpose is to return one more deputy to the Opposition.—At the same time, Antonin Goulard, Simon's playfellow and school-mate, would be very glad to see him in the Chamber, for——"

"Now, my good sister, leave us men to manage our own business.—Where is Simon?"

"He is dressing. He was very wise not to come to breakfast for he is very nervous; and though our young lawyer is in the habit of speaking in Court, he dreads this meeting as much as if he had to face his enemies."

"My word! Yes. I have often stood the fire of a battery and my soul never quaked—my body I say nothing about; but if I had to stand up here," said the old soldier, placing himself behind the table, "opposite the forty good people who will sit there, open-mouthed, their eyes fixed on mine, and expecting a set speech in sounding periods—my shirt would be soaking before I could find a word."

"And yet, my dear father, you must make that effort on my behalf," said Simon Giguet, coming in from the little drawing-room; "for if there is a man in the department whose word is powerful, it is certainly you. In 1815——"

"In 1815," said the particularly well-preserved little man, "I had not to speak; I merely drew up a little proclamation which raised two thousand men in twenty-four hours. And there is a great difference between putting one's name at the bottom of a broadsheet and addressing a meeting. Napoleon himself would have lost at that game. On the 18th Brumaire he talked sheer nonsense to the Five Hundred."

"But, my dear father, my whole life is at stake, my prospects, my happiness—— Just look at one person only, and fancy you are speaking to him alone—you will get through it all right."

"Mercy on us! I am only an old woman," said Madame

Marion; "but in such a case, and if I knew what it was all about—why, I could be eloquent!"

"Too eloquent, perhaps," said the Colonel. "And to shoot beyond the mark is not to hit it.—But what is in the wind?" he added, addressing his son. "For the last two days you have connected this nomination with some notion—— If my son is not elected, so much the worse for Arcis, that's all."

These words, worthy of a father, were quite in harmony with the whole life of the speaker.

Colonel Giguet, one of the most respected officers in the GRANDE ARMÉE, was one of those admirable characters which to a foundation of perfect rectitude add great delicacy of feeling. He never thrust himself forward; honors came to seek him out; hence for eleven years he had remained a captain in the artillery of the guards, rising to command a battalion in 1813, and promoted Major in 1814. His almost fanatical attachment to Napoleon prohibited his serving the Bourbons after the Emperor's first abdication. And in 1815 his devotion was so conspicuous that he would have been banished but for the Comte de Gondreville, who had his name erased from the list, and succeeded in getting him a retiring pension and the rank of Colonel.

Madame Marion, *née* Giguet, had had another brother who was Colonel of the Gendarmerie at Troyes, and with whom she had formerly lived. There she had married Monsieur Marion, receiver-general of the revenues of the department.

A brother of the late lamented Marion was presiding judge of one of the Imperial Courts. While still a pleader at Arcis this lawyer had, during the "Terror," lent his name to the famous Malin (deputy for the Aube), a representative of the people, to enable him to purchase the estate of Gondreville. Consequently, when Malin had become a senator and a count, his influence was entirely at the service of the Marions. The lawyer's brother thus got his appointment as receiver-general at a time when the Government, far from having to choose from among thirty applicants, was only too glad to find men to sit in such slippery seats.

Marion, the receiver-general, had inherited the property of his brother the judge; Madame Marion came in for that of her brother Colonel Giguet of the Gendarmerie. In 1814 Monsieur Marion suffered some reverses; he died at about the same time as the Empire, and his widow was able to make up fifteen thousand francs a year from the wreck of these fag-ends of fortune. Giguet of the Gendarmerie had left all his little wealth to his sister on hearing of his brother's marriage in 1806 to one of the daughters of a rich Hamburg banker. The admiration of all Europe for Napoleon's magnificent troopers is well known.

In 1814 Madame Marion in very narrow circumstances came to live at Arcis, her native town, where she bought a house in the Grande Place, one of the handsomest residences in the town, on a site suggesting that it had formerly been dependent on the château. Being used to entertain a great deal at Troyes, where the revenue-collector was a person of importance, her drawing-room was open to the prominent members of the Liberal circle at Arcis. A woman who is used to the position of queen of a country salon does not readily forego it. Of all habits, those of vanity are the most enduring.

Colonel Giguet, a Liberal, after being a Bonapartist—for by a singular metamorphosis, Napoleon's soldiers almost all fell in love with the constitutional system—naturally became, under the Restoration, the President of the Town Council of Arcis, which included Grévin, the notary, and Beauvisage, his son-in-law; Varlet *fils*, the leading physician in the town and Grévin's brother-in-law, with sundry other Liberals of importance.

"If our dear boy is not elected," said Madame Marion, after looking into the ante-room and the garden to make sure that nobody was listening; "he will not win Mademoiselle Beauvisage; for what he looks for in the event of his success is marrying Cécile."

"Cécile?" said the old man, opening his eyes wide to gaze at his sister in amazement.

"No one but you in all the department, brother, is likely to forget the fortune and the expectations of Mademoiselle Beauvisage."

"She is the wealthiest heiress in the department of the Aube," said Simon Giguet.

"But it seems to me that my son is not to be sneezed at!" said the old Colonel. "He is your heir; he has his mother's money; and I hope to leave him something better than my bare name."

"All that put together will not give him more than thirty thousand francs a year, and men have already come forward with as much as that—to say nothing of position——"

"And?——" asked the Colonel.

"And have been refused."

"What on earth do the Beauvisages want, then?" said Giguet, looking from his sister to his son.

It may seem strange that Colonel Giguet, Madame Marion's brother—in whose house the society of Arcis had been meeting every evening for the last four-and-twenty years, whose salon rang with the echo of every rumor, every slander, every piece of gossip of the countryside—where perhaps they were even manufactured—should be ignorant of such facts and events. But his ignorance is accounted for when it is pointed out that this noble survivor of the Imperial phalanx went to bed and rose with the fowls, as old men do who want to live all the days of their life. Hence he was never present at confidential "talks."

There are, in provincial life, two kinds of confidential talk: that held in public when everybody is assembled to play cards and gossip, and that which simmers like a carefully watched pot when only two or three trustworthy friends remain, who will certainly not repeat anything that is said, excepting in their own drawing-room to two or three other friends equally to be relied on.

For the past nine years, since his political party had come to the top, the Colonel lived almost out of the world. He always rose with the sun, and devoted himself to horticulture;

he was devoted to flowers; but of all flowers, he only cherished his roses. He had the stained hands of a true gardener. He himself tended his beds—his squares he called them. His squares! The word reminded him of the gaudy array of men drawn up on the field of battle. He was always holding council with his man, and, especially for the last two years, seldom mingled with the company, rarely seeing any visitors. He took one meal only with the family—his dinner; for he was up too early to breakfast with his sister and his son. It is to the Colonel's skill that the world owes the Giguet rose, famous among amateurs.

This old man, a sort of domestic fetich, was brought out, of course, on great occasions; some families have a demigod of this kind, and make a display of him as they would of a title.

"I have a suspicion that since the Revolution of July Madame Beauvisage has a hankering after living in Paris," said Madame Marion. "Being compelled to remain here till her father dies, she has transferred her ambition and placed her hopes in her future son-in-law; the fair matron dreams of the splendors of a political position."

"And could you love Cécile?" asked the Colonel of his son.

"Yes, father."

"Does she take to you?"

"I think so. But the important point is that her mother and her grandfather should fancy me. Although old Grévin is pleased to oppose my election, success would bring Madame Beauvisage to accept me, for she will hope to govern me to her mind, and be minister under my name."

"A good joke!" cried Madame Marion. "And what does she take us for?"

"Whom has she refused then?" asked the Colonel of his sister.

"Well, within the last three months they say that Antonin Goulard and Monsieur Frédéric Marest, the public prosecutor, got very equivocal replies, meaning anything excepting *Yes*."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the old man, throwing up his arms, "what times we live in! Why, Cécile is a hosier's daughter, a farmer's grandchild.—Does Madame Beauvisage look for a Comte de Cinq-Cygne for a son-in-law?"

"Nay, brother, do not make fun of the Beauvisages. Cécile is rich enough to choose a husband wherever she pleases—even of the rank of the Cygnes.—But I hear the bell announcing the arrival of some elector; I must go, and am sorry that I cannot listen to what is said."

Though, politically speaking, 1839 is far enough from 1847, we can still remember the elections which produced the Coalition, a brief attempt made by the Chamber of Deputies to carry into effect the threatened parliamentary government; a Cromwellian threat which, for lack of a Cromwell, and under a King averse to fraud, could only result in the system we now live under, of a Ministry and Chamber for all the world like the puppets that are worked by the owner of a show, to the great delight of the always gaping passer-by.

The district of Arcis-sur-Aube was at that time in a strange position, believing itself free to elect a deputy. From 1816 till 1836 it had always returned one of the most ponderous orators of the Left, one of those seventeen whom the Liberal party loved to designate as *great citizens*—no less a man, in short, than François Keller, of the firm of Keller Brothers, son-in-law to the Comte de Gondreville.

Gondreville, one of the finest estates in France, is not more than a quarter of a league from Arcis. The banker, lately created count and peer of France, proposed, no doubt, to hand on to his son, now thirty years of age, his position as deputy, so as to fit him in due time to sit among the peers.

Charles Keller, already a major holding a staff appointment, and now a viscount, as one of the Prince Royal's favorites, was attached to the party of the Citizen King. A splendid future seemed to lie before a young man of immense wealth, high courage, and noteworthy devotion to the new

dynasty—grandson to the Comte de Gondreville, and nephew of the Maréchale de Carigliano. But this election, indispensable to his future plans, presented very great difficulties.

Ever since the advancement to power of the citizen class, Arcis had felt a vague yearning for independence. The last few elections, at which François Keller had been returned, had been disturbed by certain Republicans whose red caps and wagging beards had not proved alarming to the good folk of Arcis. By working up the feeling of the country, the radical candidate had secured thirty or forty votes. Some of the residents, humiliated by seeing their town a rotten borough of the Opposition, then joined these democrats, but not to support democracy. In France, when the votes are polled, strange politico-chemical products are evolved in which the laws of affinity are quite upset. Now to nominate young Major Keller, in 1839, after returning his father for twenty years, would be positively slavish, a servitude against which the pride of many rich townsmen rose in arms—men who thought themselves quite the equals of Monsieur Malin Comte de Gondreville or of Keller Brothers, bankers, or the Cinq-Cygnes or the King himself, if it came to that! Hence the numerous partisans of old Gondreville, the king of the department, hoped for some fresh stroke of the astuteness he had so often shown. To keep up the influence of his family in the district of Arcis, the old statesman would, no doubt, put forward some man of straw belonging to the place, who would then accept public office and make way for Charles Keller, a state of things which requires the elect of the people to stand another election.

When Simon Giguet sounded Grévin the notary, the Count's faithful ally, on the subject of the candidature, the old man replied that, without knowing anything of the Comte de Gondreville's intentions, Charles Keller was the man for him, and that he should do his utmost to secure his return.

As soon as Grévin's announcement was made known in Arcis there was a strong feeling against him. Although this Aristides of Champagne had, during thirty years of practice,

commanded the fullest confidence of the citizens; although he had been mayor of the town from 1804 till 1814, and again during the Hundred Days; although the Opposition had recognized him as their leader till the days of triumph in 1830, when he had refused the honor of the mayoralty in consideration of his advanced age; finally, although the town, in proof of its attachment, had then elected his son-in-law, Monsieur Beauvisage, they now all turned against him, and some of the younger spirits accused him of being in his dotage. Simon Giguet's supporters attached themselves to Philéas Beauvisage the mayor, who was all the more ready to side with them because, without being on bad terms with his father-in-law, he affected an independence which resulted in a coolness, but which the cunning old father-in-law overlooked, finding in it a convenient lever for acting on the townspeople of Arcis.

Monsieur le Maire, questioned only the day before on the market-place, had declared that he would sooner vote for the first name on the list of eligible citizens of Arcis than for Charles Keller, for whom he had, however, the highest esteem.

"Arcis shall no longer be a rotten borough!" cried he. "Or I go to live in Paris."

Flatter the passions of the day, and you become a hero at once, even at Arcis-sur-Aube.

"Monsieur le Maire has given crowning proof of his firmness of temper," they said.

Nothing gathers faster than a legalized rebellion. In the course of the evening Madame Marion and her friends had organized for the morrow a meeting of "Independent Electors" in favor of Simon Giguet, the Colonel's son. And now that morrow was to-day, and she had turned the whole house topsy-turvy for the reception of the friends on whose independence they relied.

Simon Giguet, the home-made candidate of a little town that was jealously eager to return one of its sons, had, as has been seen, at once taken advantage of this little stir to

make himself the representative of the wants and interests of Southwestern Champagne. At the same time, the position and fortune of the Giguet family were wholly due to the Comte de Gondreville. But when an election is in the case, can feelings be considered?

This drama is written for the enlightenment of lands so unhappy as to be ignorant of the benefits of national representation, and unaware, therefore, of the intestinal struggles and the Brutus-like sacrifices a little town has to suffer in giving birth to a deputy—a natural and majestic spectacle which can only be compared to child-birth—there are the same efforts, the same defilement, the same travail, the same triumph.

It may be wondered how an only son with a very sufficient fortune happened to be, like Simon Giguet, an unpretending advocate in the little town of Arcis, where advocates have hardly any employment. So a few words are here necessary describing the candidate.

During his wife's lifetime, from 1806 to 1813, the Colonel had had three children, of whom Simon, the eldest, survived the other two. The mother died in 1814, one of the children in 1818, the other in 1825. Until he remained the sole survivor, Simon had, of course, been brought up with a view to making his own living by some lucrative profession. Then, when he was an only son, Simon's prospects underwent a reverse. Madame Marion's hopes for her nephew had been largely founded on his inheriting considerable wealth from his grandfather, the Hamburg banker; but the German, dying in 1826, left his grandson Giguet no more than two thousand francs a year. The financier, endowed with great powers of procreation, had counteracted the monotony of commercial life by indulging in the joys of fatherhood; hence he favored the families of the eleven other children who clung to him, as it were, and made him believe—what, indeed, seemed not unlikely—that Simon would be a rich man.

The Colonel was bent on putting his son into an independent profession; and this was why: the Giguets could

not hope for any favor from Government under the Restoration. Even if Simon had not had an ardent Bonapartist for his father, he belonged to a family all of whom had justly incurred the disapprobation of the Cinq-Cygne family, in consequence of the part taken by Giguet, the Colonel of Gendarmes, and all the Marions—Madame Marion included—as witnesses for the prosecution in the famous trial of the Simeuses. These brothers were unjustly sentenced, in 1805, as guilty of carrying off and detaining the Comte de Gondreville (at that time a senator, after having been the people's representative), who had despoiled their family of its fortune.

Grévin had been not only one of the most important witnesses, but also an ardent promoter of the proceedings. At this time this trial still divided the district of Arcis into two factions—one believing in the innocence of the condemned parties and upholding the family of Cinq-Cygne, the other supporting the Comte de Gondreville and his adherents. Though, after the Restoration, the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne made use of the influence she acquired by the return of the Bourbons to settle everything to her mind in the department, the Comte de Gondreville found means to counterbalance the supremacy of the Cinq-Cygnes by the secret authority he held over the Liberals by means of Grévin and Colonel Giguet. He also had the support of his son-in-law Keller, who was unfailingly elected deputy in spite of the Cinq-Cygnes, and considerable influence in the State Council so long as Louis XVIII. lived.

It was not till after the death of that king that the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne was successful in getting Michu appointed presiding judge of the Lower Court at Arcis. She was bent on getting this place for the grandson of the land steward who had perished on the scaffold at Troyes, the victim of his attachment to the Simeuses, and whose full-length portrait was to be seen in her drawing-room both in Paris and at Cinq-Cygne. Until 1823 the Comte constantly hindered the appointment of Michu.

It was by the Comte de Gondreville's advice that Colonel Giguet had made a lawyer of his son. Simon had all the better chance of shining in the Arcis district, because he was the only pleader there; as a rule, in these small towns, the attorneys plead in their own cases. Simon had had some little success at the assizes of the department; but he was not the less the butt of many pleasantries from Frédéric Marest, the public prosecutor; Olivier Vinet, his deputy; and Michu, the presiding judge—the three wits of the court. Simon Giguet, it must be owned, like all men who are laughed at, laid himself open to the cruel power of ridicule. He listened to his own voice, he was ready to talk on any pretence, he spun out endless reels of cut-and-dried phrases, which were accepted as eloquence among the superior citizens of Arcis. The poor fellow was one of the class of bores who have an explanation for everything, even for the simplest matters. He would explain the rain; the causes of the Revolution of July; he would also explain things that were inexplicable—he would explain Louis-Philippe, Monsieur Odilon Barrot, Monsieur Thiers; he explained the Eastern Question; the state of the province of Champagne; he explained 1789, the custom-house tariff, the views of humanitarians, magnetism, and the distribution of the civil list.

This young man, who was lean and bilious-looking, and tall enough to account for his sonorous emptiness—for a tall man is rarely remarkable for distinguished gifts—caricatured the puritanism of the Extreme Left, whose members are all so precise, after the fashion of a prude who has some intrigue to conceal. Always dressed in black, he wore a white tie that hung loose round his neck, while his face seemed to be set in stiff white paper, for he still affected the upright starched collars which fashion has happily discarded. His coat and trousers were always too big for him. He had what, in the country, is termed dignity, that is to say, he stood stiffly upright while he was boring you—Antonin Goulard, his friend, accusing him of aping Monsieur Dupin. And, in fact, he was rather too much given to low shoes, and coarse black spun-silk stockings.

Under the protection of the respect constantly shown to his old father, and the influence exerted by his aunt in a small town whose principal inhabitants had haunted her receptions for four-and-twenty years, Simon Giguet, already possessed of about ten thousand francs a year, irrespective of the fees he earned, and his aunt's fortune, which would some day certainly be his, never doubted of his election. At the same time, the first sound of the door-bell, announcing the advent of the more important electors, made the ambitious youth's heart beat with vague alarms. Simon did not deceive himself as to the cleverness or the vast resources at the command of old Grévin, nor as to the effect of the heroic measures that would be taken by the Ministry to support the interests of the brave young officer—at that time in Africa on the staff of the Prince—who was the son of one of the great citizen-lords of France, and the nephew of a Maréchale.

"I really think I have the colic," said he to his father. "I have a sickly burning just over the pit of my stomach, which I do not at all like——"

"The oldest soldiers," replied the Colonel, "felt just the same when the guns opened fire at the beginning of a battle."

"What will it be, then, in the Chamber!" exclaimed the lawyer.

"The Comte de Gondreville has told us," the old soldier went on, "that more than one speaker is liable to the little discomforts which we old leather-breeches were used to feel at the beginning of a fight. And all for a few empty words! —But, dear me, you want to be a deputy," added the old man, with a shrug. "Be a deputy!"

"The triumph, father, will be Cécile! Cécile is enormously rich, and in these days money is power."

"Well, well, times have changed! In the Emperor's time it was bravery that was needed."

"Every age may be summed up in a word!" said Simon, repeating a remark of the old Comte de Gondreville's, which was thoroughly characteristic of the man. "Under the

Empire to ruin a man you said, 'He is a coward!' Nowadays we say, 'He is a swindler.'"

"Unhappy France, what have you come to!" cried the Colonel. "I will go back to my roses."

"No, no, stay here, father. You are the keystone of the arch!"

The first to appear was the Mayor, Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage, and with him came his father-in-law's successor, the busiest notary in the town, Achille Pigoult, the grandson of an old man who had been justice of the peace at Arcis all through the Revolution, the Empire, and the early days of the Restoration. Achille Pigoult, a man of about two-and-thirty, had been old Grévin's clerk for eighteen years, without a hope of getting an office as notary. His father, the old justice's son, had failed badly in business, and died of an apoplexy so called. Then the Comte de Gondreville, on whom old Pigoult had some claims outstanding from 1793, had lent the necessary security, and so enabled the grandson to purchase Grévin's office; the old justice of the peace had, in fact, conducted the preliminary inquiry in the Simeuse case. So Achille had established himself in a house in the Church Square belonging to the Count, and let at so low a rent that it was easy to perceive how anxious the wily politician was to keep a hold over the chief notary of the town.

This young Pigoult, a lean little man, with eyes that seemed to pierce the green spectacles which did not mitigate their cunning expression, and fully informed of everybody's concerns in the district, had acquired a certain readiness of speech from the habit of talking on business, and was supposed to be a great wag, simply because he spoke out with rather more wit than the natives had at their command. He was still a bachelor, looking forward to making some good match by the intervention of his two patrons—Grévin and the Comte de Gondreville. And lawyer Giguet could not repress a start of surprise when he saw Achille as a satellite to Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage.

The little notary, his face so seamed with the small-pox that

it looked as if it were covered with a white honeycomb, was a perfect contrast to the burly mayor, whose face was like a full moon, and a florid moon too. This pink-and-white complexion was set off by a beaming smile, the result less of a happy frame of mind than of the shape of his mouth; but Philéas Beauvisage was blessed with such perfect self-satisfaction, that he smiled incessantly on everybody and under all circumstances. Those doll-like lips would have grinned at a funeral. The bright sparkle in his round blue eyes did not belie that insufferable and perpetual smile.

The man's entire self-satisfaction passed, however, for benevolence and friendliness, all the more readily because he had a style of speech of his own, marked by the most extravagant use of polite phraseology. He always "had the honor" to inquire after the health of a friend, he invariably added the adjectives *dear, good, excellent;* and he was prodigal of complimentary phrases on every occasion of the minor grievances or pleasures of life. Thus, under a deluge of commonplace, he concealed his utter incapacity, his lack of education, and a vacillating nature which can only find adequate description in the old-fashioned word weathercock. But then this weathercock had for its pinion handsome Madame Beauvisage, Séverine Grévin, the notable lady of the district.

When Séverine had heard of what she was pleased to call her husband's freak *à propos* to the election, she had said to him that very morning:

"You did not do badly by asserting your independence; but you must not go to the meeting at the Giguets' without taking Achille Pigoult; I have sent to tell him to call for you."

Now sending Achille Pigoult to keep an eye on Beauvisage was tantamount to sending a spy from the Gondreville faction to attend the Giguet's meeting. So it is easy to imagine what a grimace twisted Simon's puritanical features when he found himself extending a civil welcome to a regular visitor in his aunt's drawing-room, and an influential elector, in whom he scented an enemy.

"Ah!" thought he to himself, "I was a fool when I refused the security money he asked me to lend him! Old Gondreville was sharper than I.—Good-day, Achille," he said aloud, with an air of ease. "You will give me a tough job or two."

"Your meeting is not a conspiracy against the independence of our votes, I suppose," replied the notary with a smile. "We are playing above board?"

"Above board!" repeated Beauvisage.

And the Mayor laughed that meaningless laugh with which some men end every sentence, and which might be called the burden of their song. Then Monsieur le Maire assumed what we may call his third position, full-face, and very upright, with his hands behind his back. He was in a whole suit of black, with a highly decorative white waistcoat, open so as to show a glimpse of two diamond studs worth several thousand francs.

"We will fight it out, and be none the worse friends," Philéas went on. "That is the essential feature of constitutional institutions.—Hah, ha, ha! That is my notion of the alliance between monarchy and liberty.—He, he, he!"

Thereupon the Mayor took Simon by the hand, saying:

"And how are you, my dear friend? Your dear aunt and the worthy Colonel are, no doubt, as well to-day as they were yesterday—at least we may presume that they are.—Heh, heh! A little put out, perhaps, by the ceremony we are preparing for, perhaps.—So, so! Young man" (*yong maan,* he said), "we are starting in our political career?—Ah, ha, ha! This is our first step!—We must never draw back—it is a strong measure! Ay, and I would rather you than I should rush into the tempests of the Chamber.—He, he! pleasing as it may be to find the sovereign power of France embodied in one's own person—he, he!—one four-hundred-and-fifty-third part of it—he, he!"

There was a pleasant fulness in Philéas Beauvisage's voice that corresponded admirably with the gourd-like rotundity of his face and its hue as of a pale buff pumpkin, his round

back, and broad protuberant person. His voice, as deep and mellow as a bass, had the velvety quality of a baritone, and the laugh with which he ended every sentence had a silvery ring. If God, in stocking the earthly paradise, had wanted to complete the set of species by adding a country citizen, He could not have moulded a more magnificent and developed specimen than Philéas Beauvisage.

"I admire the devotion of men who can throw themselves into the storms of political life," he went on. "He, he, he! You need a nerve that I cannot boast of. Who would have said in 1812—in 1813 even—that this was what we were coming to?—For my part, I am prepared for anything, now that asphalt and india-rubber, railways and steam, are metamorphosing the ground under our feet, our greatcoats, and the length of distances.—Ha, ha!"

This speech was freely seasoned with the eternal laugh by which Philéas pointed the commonplace facetiousness that passes muster with his class, and he emphasized it by a gesture he had made his own: he clenched his right fist and rubbed it into the hollow palm of the left hand with a peculiarly jovial air. This action was an accompaniment to his giggle on the many occasions when he flattered himself that he had been witty.

It is, no doubt, superfluous to add that Philéas was regarded at Arcis as an agreeable and charming man.

"I will endeavor," said Simon Giguet, "to be a worthy representative——"

"Of the sheep of Champagne," said Achille Pigoult quickly, interrupting his friend.

The aspirant took the irony without replying, for he had to go forward and receive two more electors. One was the owner of the *Mulet,* the best inn of the town, situated in the market square, at the corner of the Rue de Brienne. This worthy innkeeper, whose name was Poupart, had married the sister of a man in the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne's service, the notorious Gothard, who had figured at the great trial. Gothard had been acquitted. Poupart, though he was of all

the townsfolk one of the most devoted to the Cinq-Cygnes, had, two days since, been, been so diligently and so cleverly wheedled by Colonel's Giguet's servant, that he fancied he would be doing their enemy an ill turn by bringing all his influence to bear on the election of Simon Giguet; and he had just been talking to this effect to a chemist named Fromaget, who, as he was not employed by the Gondreville family, was very ready to plot against the Kellers. These two men, important among the lower middle class, could control a certain number of doubtful votes, for they were the advisers of several electors to whom the political opinions of the candidates were a matter of indifference.

Simon, therefore, took Poupart in hand, leaving Fromaget to his father, who had just come in, and was greeting those who had arrived.

The deputy inspector of public works of the district, the secretary to the Mairie, four bailiffs, three attorneys, the clerk of assize, and the justice's clerk, the revenue collector, and the registrar, two doctors—old Varlet's rivals, Grévin's brother-in-law—a miller named Laurent Coussard, leader of the Republican party at Arcis—the mayor's two deputies, the bookseller and printer of the place, and a dozen or so of townsfolk came in by degrees, and then walked about the garden in groups while waiting till the company should be numerous enough to hold a meeting.

Finally, by twelve o'clock, about fifty men in their Sunday attire, most of them having come out of curiosity to see the fine rooms of which so much had been said in the district, were seated in the chairs arranged for them by Madame Marion. The windows were left open, and the silence was presently so complete that the rustle of a silk dress could be heard; for Madame Marion could not resist the temptation to go out into the garden and sit where she could hear what was going on. The cook, the housemaid, and the man-servant remained in the dining-room, fully sharing their master's feelings.

"Gentlemen," said Simon Giguet, "some of you wish to

do my father the honor of placing him in the chair as president of this meeting, but Colonel Giguet desires me to express his acknowledgments and decline it, while deeply grateful to you for the proposal, which he takes as a recompense for his services to his country.—We are under my father's roof, and he feels that he must beg to be excused; he proposes a merchant of the highest respectability—a gentleman on whom your suffrages conferred the mayoralty of this town—Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage."

"Hear, hear!"

"We are, I believe, agreed that in this meeting—purely friendly, and perfectly free, without prejudice in any way to the great preliminary meeting, when it will be your business to question your candidates and weigh their merits—we are agreed, I say, to follow the forms—the constitutional forms—of the elective Chamber?"

"Yes, yes!" unanimously.

"Therefore," said Simon, "I have the honor, speaking in the name of all present, to request Monsieur the Mayor to take the president's chair."

Philéas rose and crossed the room, feeling himself turn as red as a cherry. When he found himself behind the tea-table, he saw not a hundred eyes, but a hundred thousand lights. The sunshine seemed to put the room in a blaze, and, to use his own words, his throat was full of salt.

"Return thanks!" murmured Simon in his ear.

"Gentlemen——"

The silence was so alarming that Philéas felt his heart in his mouth.

"What am I to say, Simon?" he whispered.

"Well?" said Achille Pigoult.

"Gentlemen," said Simon, prompted by the little notary's spiteful interjection, "the honor you have done the mayor may have startled without surprising him."

"It is so," said Beauvisage. "I am too much overpowered by this compliment from my fellow-citizens not to be excessively flattered."

"Hear, hear!" cried the notary only.

"The devil may take me," said Beauvisage to himself, "if I am ever caught again to make speeches!"

"Will Monsieur Fromaget and Monsieur Marcelin accept the functions of tellers?" asked Simon.

"It would be more in order," said Achille Pigoult, rising, "if the meeting were to elect the two members who support the chair—in imitation of the Chamber."

"It would be far better," observed Monsieur Mollot, an enormous man, clerk of the assizes, "otherwise the whole business will be a farce, and we shall not be really free. There would be no just cause why the whole of the proceedings should not be regulated as Monsieur Simon might dictate."

Simon muttered a few words to Beauvisage, who rose, and was presently delivered of the word, "Gentlemen!" which might be described as of thrilling interest.

"Allow me, Mr. President," said Achille Pigoult; "it is your part to preside, not to discuss."

"Gentlemen," said Beauvisage again, prompted by Simon, "if we are to—to conform to—to parliamentary usage—I would beg the Honorable Monsieur Pigoult to—to come and speak from the table—this table."

Pigoult started forward and stood by the tea-table, his fingers lightly resting on the edge, and showed his courage by speaking fluently—almost like the great Monsieur Thiers.

"Gentlemen, it was not I who proposed that we should imitate the Chamber; till now it has always appeared to me that the Chambers are truly inimitable. At the same time, it was self-evident that a meeting of sixty-odd notables of Champagne must select a president, for no sheep can move without a shepherd. If we had voted by ballot, I am quite sure our esteemed mayor would have been unanimously elected. His antagonism to the candidate put forward by his relations shows that he possesses civic courage in no ordinary degree, since he can shake off the strongest ties—those of family connection.

"To set public interest above family feeling is so great an effort, that, to achieve it, we are always obliged to remind ourselves that Brutus, from his tribune, has looked down on us for two thousand five hundred odd years. It seemed quite natural to Maître Giguet—who was so clever as to divine our wishes with regard to the choice of a chairman—to guide us in our selection of the tellers; but, in response to my remark, you thought that once was enough, and you were right. Our common friend, Simon Giguet, who is, in fact, to appear as a candidate, would appear too much as the master of the situation, and would then lose that high place in our opinion which his venerable father has secured by his diffidence.

"Now, what is our worthy chairman doing by accepting the presidency on the lines suggested to him by the candidate? Why, he is robbing us of our liberty. And, I ask you, is it seemly that the chairman of our choice should call upon us to vote, by rising and sitting, for the two tellers? Gentlemen, that would be a choice already made. Should we be free to choose? Can a man sit still when his neighbor stands? If I were proposed, every one would rise, I believe, out of politeness; and so, as all would rise for each one in turn, there would be simply no choice when every one had voted for every one else."

"Very true!" said the sixty listeners.

"Well, then, let each of us write two names on a voting-paper, and then those who take their seats on each side of the chairman may regard themselves as ornaments to the meeting. They will be qualified, conjointly with the chairman, to decide on the majority when we vote by rising and sitting on any resolution to be passed.

"We have met, I believe, to promise the candidate such support as we can command at the preliminary meeting, at which every elector in the district will be present. This I pronounce to be a solemn occasion. Are we not voting for the four-hundredth part of the governing power, as Monsieur le Maire told us just now with the appropriate and characteristic wit that we so highly appreciate?"

During this address Colonel Giguet had been cutting a sheet of paper into strips, and Simon sent for an inkstand and pens. There was a pause.

This introductory discussion had greatly disturbed Simon and aroused the attention of the sixty worthies in convocation. In a few minutes they were all busy writing the names, and the cunning Pigoult gave it out that the votes were in favor of Monsieur Mollot, clerk of assize, and Monsieur Godivet, the registrar. These two nominations naturally displeased Fromaget the druggist and Marcelin the attorney.

"You have been of service," said Achille Pigoult, "by enabling us to assert our independence; you may be prouder of being rejected than you could have been of being chosen."

Everybody laughed. Simon Giguet restored silence by asking leave of the chairman to speak. Beauvisage was already damp with perspiration, but he summoned all his courage to say:

"Monsieur Simon Giguet will address the meeting."

"Gentlemen," said the candidate, "allow me first to thank Monsieur Achille Pigoult, who, although our meeting is a strictly friendly one——"

"Is preparatory to the great preliminary meeting," Marcelin put in.

"I was about to say so," Simon went on. "In the first place, I beg to thank Monsieur Achille Pigoult for having proceeded on strictly parliamentary lines. To-day, for the first time, the district of Arcis will make free use——"

"Free use!" said Pigoult, interrupting the orator.

"Free use!" cried the assembly.

"Free use," repeated Simon, "of the right of voting in the great contest of the general election of a member to be returned to Parliament; and as, in a few days, we shall have a meeting, to which every elector is invited, to form an opinion of the candidates, we may think ourselves fortunate to acquire here, on a small scale, some practice in the customs of such meetings. We shall be all the forwarder as to a decision on the political prospects of the town of Arcis; for what

we have to do to-day is to consider the town instead of a family, the country instead of a man."

He went on to sketch the history of the elections for the past twenty years. While approving of the repeated election of François Keller, he said that now the time had come for shaking off the yoke of the Gondrevilles. Arcis could not be a fief of the Liberals any more than it could be a fief of the Cinq-Cygnes. Advanced opinions were making their way in France, and Charles Keller did not represent them. Charles Keller, now a viscount, was a courtier; he could never be truly independent, since, in proposing him as a candidate for election, it was done more with a view to fitting him to succeed his father as a peer than as a deputy to the Lower Chamber—and so forth, and so forth. Finally, Simon begged to offer himself as a candidate for their suffrages, pledging himself to sit under the wing of the illustrious Odilon Barrot, and never to desert the glorious standard of Progress. Progress!—a word behind which, at that time, more insincere ambitions took shelter than definite ideas; for, after 1830, it could only stand for the pretensions of certain hungry democrats.

Still, the word had much effect in Arcis, and lent importance to any man who wrote it on his flag. A man who announced himself as a partisan of Progress was a philosopher in all questions, and politically a Puritan. He was in favor of railways, mackintoshes, penitentiaries, negro emancipation, savings-banks, seamless shoes, gas-lighting, asphalt pavements, universal suffrage, and the reduction of the civil list. It was also a pronouncement of opposition to the treaties of 1815, to the Elder Branch (the Bourbons), to the Giant of the North, "perfidious Albion," and to every undertaking, good or bad, inaugurated by the Government. As may be seen, the word Progress can stand equally well for black or white. It was a furbishing up of the word Liberalism, a new rallying cry for new ambitions.

"If I rightly understand what we are here for," said Jean Violette, a stocking-weaver, who had, two years since, bought

the Beauvisage business, "we are to bind ourselves to secure, by every means in our power, the return of Monsieur Simon Giguet at the election as member for Arcis in the place of the Count François Keller. And if we are all agreed to combine to that end, we have only to say *Yes* or *No* to that question."

"That is going much too fast. Political matters are not managed in that way, or they would cease to be politics!" cried Pigoult, as his grandfather, a man of eighty-six, came into the room. "The last speaker pronounces a decision on what is, in my humble opinion, the very subject under discussion. I beg to speak."

"Monsieur Achille Pigoult will address the meeting," said Beauvisage, who could now get through this sentence with due municipal and constitutional dignity.

"Gentlemen," said the little notary, "if there be in all Arcis a house where no opposition ought to be made to the influence of the Comte de Gondreville and the Keller family, is it not this? The worthy Colonel—Colonel Giguet—is the only member of this household who has not experienced the benefits of senatorial influence, since he never asked anything of the Comte de Gondreville, who, however, had his name erased from the list of exiles in 1815, and secured him the pension he enjoys, without any steps on the part of the Colonel, who is the pride of our town——"

A murmur, flattering to the old man, ran through the crowd.

"But," the orator went on, "the Marion family are loaded with the Count's favors. But for his patronage the late Colonel Giguet never would have had the command of the Gendarmerie of this department. The late Monsieur Marion would not have been presiding judge of the Imperial Court here but for the Count—to whom I, for my part, am eternally indebted. You will therefore understand how natural it is that I should take his part in this room.—And, in fact, there are few persons in this district who have not received some kindness from that family."

There was a stir among the audience.

"A candidate comes forward," Achille went on with some vehemence, "and I have a right to inquire into his past before I intrust him with power to act for me. Now I will not accept ingratitude in my delegate, for ingratitude is like misfortune—it leads from bad to worse. We have been a stepping-stone for the Kellers, you will say; well, what I have just listened to makes me fear that we may become a stepping-stone for the Giguets. We live in an age of facts, do we not? Well, then, let us inquire what will be the results for the electors of Arcis if we return Simon Giguet?

"Independence is your cry?—Well, Simon, whom I am scouting as a candidate, is my friend—as he is the friend of all who hear me—and personally I should be delighted to see him as an orator of the Left, between Garnier-Pagès and Laffitte; but what will be the result for the district represented?—It will have lost the countenance of the Comte de Gondreville and the Kellers, and in the course of five years we shall all feel the want of one or the other. If we want to get leave for a poor fellow who is drawn for the conscription, we apply to the Maréchale de Carigliano. We rely on the Kellers' interest in many matters of business which their good word settles at once. We have always found the old Comte de Gondreville kind and helpful; if you belong to Arcis, you are shown in without being kept waiting. Those three families know every family in the place.—But where is the Maison Giguet's bank, and what influence has it on the Ministry? What credit does it command in the Paris markets? If we want to have a good stone bridge in the place of our wretched timber one, will the Giguets extract the necessary funds from the Department and the State?

"If we return Charles Keller, we shall perpetuate a bond of alliance and friendship which till now has been entirely to our advantage. By electing my good, my excellent friend and schoolfellow Simon Giguet, we shall be constantly the worse till he is in office! And I know his modesty too well to think that he will contradict me when I express a doubt as to his rapid advancement to the Ministry! (*Laughter.*)

"I came to this meeting to oppose a resolution which, I think, would be fatal to our district. 'Charles Keller is a courtier,' I am told.—So much the better. We shall not have to pay for his political apprenticeship; he knows all the business of the place, and the requirements of parliamentary etiquette; he is more nearly a statesman than my friend Simon, who does not pretend that he has trained himself to be a Pitt or a Talleyrand in our little town of Arcis——"

"Danton was a native of Arcis!" cried Colonel Giguet, furious at this harangue, which was only too truthful.

"Hear, hear!" The word was shouted, and sixty listeners clapped the speaker.

"My father is very ready," said Simon in an undertone to Beauvisage.

"I cannot understand why, in discussing an election matter, there should be so much exaggeration of any ties between us and the Comte de Gondreville," the old Colonel went on, starting to his feet, while the blood mounted to his face. "My son inherits his fortune from his mother; he never asked the Comte de Gondreville for anything. If the Count had never existed, my son would have been just what he is—the son of an artillery Colonel who owes his promotion to his services—a lawyer who has always held the same opinions.—I would say to the Comte de Gondreville himself, 'We have elected your son-in-law for twenty years. Now we wish to prove that when we did so it was of our own free-will, and we are returning an Arcis man to show that the old spirit of 1793—to which you owed your fortune—still lives on the native soil of Danton, Malin, Grévin, Pigoult, Marion——' And so——"

The old man sat down.

There was a great commotion. Achille opened his mouth to speak. Beauvisage, who would not have felt himself presiding if he had not rung his bell, added to the racket by ringing for silence. It was by this time two o'clock.

"I must be permitted to point out to the honored Colonel, whose feelings we can all understand, that he spoke without

authority from the chair, which is contrary to parliamentary usage," said Achille Pigoult.

"I see no necessity for calling the Colonel to order," said Beauvisage. "As a father——"

Silence was restored.

"We did not come here," said Fromaget, "to say *Amen* to everything put forward by the Giguets father and son——"

"No, no!" cried the audience.

"This looks badly!" said Madame Marion to the cook.

"Gentlemen," said Achille, "I will confine myself to asking my friend Simon Giguet to set forth categorically what he proposes to do to further our interests."

"Yes, yes!"

"And when, may I ask," said Simon Giguet, "did good citizens like the men of Arcis first begin to make the sacred mission of a deputy a matter of bargaining and business?"

It is impossible to overestimate the effect of fine sentiment on a crowd. Noble maxims are always applauded, and the humiliation of the country voted for all the same; just as a jail-bird who yearns for the punishment of Robert Macaire when he sees the play, will nevertheless murder the first Monsieur Germeuil who comes in his way.

"Hear, hear!" cried some thorough-going partisans.

"If you send me to the Chamber, it will be to represent your principles—the principles of 1789—to be a cipher, if you will, of the Opposition; but to vote with it, to enlighten the Government, to make war against abuses, and insist on progress in all particulars——"

"But what do you call progress? Our notion of progress would be to bring all this part of the country under cultivation," said Fromaget.

"Progress? I will explain to you what I mean by progress," cried Giguet, provoked by the interruption.

"It is the Rhine-frontier for France," said Colonel Giguet, "and the treaties of 1815 torn across."

"It is keeping up the price of wheat and keeping down the price of bread!" said Pigoult mockingly, and uttering

in jest one of the nonsensical cries which France believes in.

"It is the happiness of the multitude achieved by the triumph of humanitarian doctrines."

"What did I tell you?" the wily notary muttered to his neighbors.

"Hush, silence—we want to hear!" said some.

"Gentlemen," said Mollot, with a fat smile, "the debate is noisy; give your attention to the speaker; allow him to explain——"

"Ba-a-a, ba-a-aa," bleated a friend of Achille's, who was gifted with a power of ventriloquism that was invaluable at elections.

A roar of laughter burst from the audience, who were essentially men of their province. Simon Giguet folded his arms and waited till the storm of merriment should be over.

"If that was intended as a reproof," he said, "a hint that I was marching with the flock of those noble defenders of the rights of man, who cry out, who write book after book—of the immortal priest who pleads for murdered Poland—of the bold pamphleteers—of those who keep an eye on the civil list—of the philosophers who cry out for honesty in the action of our institutions—if so, I thank my unknown friend.—To me progress means the realization of all that was promised us at the Revolution of July; electoral reform—and——"

"Then you are a democrat," interrupted Achille Pigoult.

"No," replied the candidate. "Am I a democrat because I aim at a regular and legal development of our institutions? To me progress is fraternity among all the members of the great French family, and we cannot deny that much suffering——"

At three o'clock Simon Giguet was still explaining the meaning of progress, and some of the audience were emitting steady snores expressive of deep slumbers.

Achille Pigoult had artfully persuaded them to listen in religious silence to the speaker, who was sinking, drowning, in his endless phrases and parentheses.

At that hour several groups of citizens, electors, and non-electors were standing about in front of the Château d'Arcis. The gate opens on to the Place at a right angle to that of Madame Marion's house. Several streets turn out of this square, and in the middle of it stands a covered market. Opposite the château, on the further side of the square, which is neither paved nor macadamized, so that the rain runs off in little gullies, there is a fine avenue known as the Avenue des Soupirs (of Sighs). Is this to the honor or the discredit of the women of the town? The ambiguity is, no doubt, a local witticism. Two broad walks, shaded by handsome old lime-trees, lead from the market-square to a boulevard forming another promenade, deserted, as such walks always are in a country town, and where stagnant filth takes the place of the bustling crowd of the capital.

While the discussion was at its height, to which Achille Pigoult had given a dramatic turn, with a coolness and dexterity worthy of a member of the real Parliament, four men were pacing one of the lime-walks of the Avenue des Soupirs. When they came to the square they stopped with one accord to watch the townsfolk, who were buzzing round the château like bees going into a hive at dusk. These four were the whole Ministerial party of Arcis: the sous-préfet, the public prosecutor, his deputy, and Monsieur Martener, the examining judge. The presiding judge was, as has already been explained, a partisan of the Elder Branch, and devoted to the family of Cinq-Cygne.

"Well, I cannot understand what the Government is about," the sous-préfet declared, pointing to the growing crowd. "The position is serious, and I am left without any instructions."

"In that you are like many other people," said Olivier Vinet, smiling.

"What complaint have you against the Government?" asked the public prosecutor.

"The Ministry is in a difficulty," said young Martener. "It is well known that this borough belongs, so to speak, to

the Kellers, and it has no wish to annoy them. Some consideration must be shown to the only man who can at all compare with Monsieur de Talleyrand. It is to the Comte de Gondreville that the police should go for instructions, not to the préfet."

"And meanwhile," said Frédéric Marest, "the Opposition is making a stir, and you see that Colonel Giguet's influence is strong. The mayor, Monsieur Beauvisage, is in the chair at this preliminary meeting."

"After all," said Olivier Vinet slily to the sous-préfet, "Simon Giguet is a friend of yours, a school-fellow. Even if he were a supporter of Monsieur Thiers, you would lose nothing by his being elected."

"The present Ministry might turn me out before its fall. We may know when we are likely to be kicked out, but we can never tell when we may get in again," said Antonin Goulard.

"There goes Collinet the grocer. He is the sixty-seventh qualified elector who has gone into Colonel Giguet's house," said Monsieur Martener, fulfilling his functions as examining judge by counting the electors.

"If Charles Keller is the Ministerial candidate, I ought to have been informed," said Goulard. "Time ought not to have been given for Simon Giguet to get hold of the voters."

The four gentlemen walked on slowly to where the avenues end at the market-place.

"There comes Monsieur Groslier!" said the judge, seeing a man on horseback.

The horseman was the superintendent of the police. He saw the governing body of Arcis assembled on the highway, and rode up to the four functionaries.

"Well, Monsieur Groslier?" questioned the sous-préfet, meeting him at a few paces from the other three.

"Monsieur," said the police-officer in a low voice, "Monsieur le Préfet sent me to tell you some very sad news—the Vicomte Charles Keller is dead. The news reached Paris by telegraph the day before yesterday; and the two Messieurs

Keller, the Comte de Gondreville, the Maréchale de Carigliano, in fact, all the family, came yesterday to Gondreville. Abd-el-Kader has reopened the fighting in Africa, and there has been some very hot work. The poor young man was one of the first victims to the war. You will receive confidential instructions, I was told to say, with regard to the election."

"Through whom?" asked Goulard.

"If I knew, it would cease to be confidential," replied the other. "Monsieur le Préfet himself did not know. 'It would be,' he said, 'a private communication to you from the Minister.'"

And he went on his way, while the proud and happy official laid a finger to his lips to impress on him to be secret.

"What news from the préfecture?" asked the public prosecutor when Goulard returned to join the other three functionaries.

"Nothing more satisfactory," replied Antonin, hurrying on as if to be rid of his companions.

As they made their way towards the middle of the square, saying little, for the three officials were somewhat nettled by the hasty pace assumed by the sous-préfet, Monsieur Martener saw old Madame Beauvisage, Philéas' mother, surrounded by almost all the people who had gathered there, and apparently telling them some long story. An attorney named Sinot, whose clients were the royalists of the town and district, and who had not gone to the Giguet meeting, stepped out of the crowd, and hurrying up to Madame Marion's house, rang the bell violently.

"What is the matter?" asked Frédéric Marest, dropping his eyeglass, and informing the other two of this proceeding.

"The matter, gentlemen," replied Antonin Goulard, seeing no occasion for keeping a secret which would at once be told by others, "is that Charles Keller has been killed in Africa, an event which gives Simon Giguet every chance!—You know Arcis; there could be no ministerial candidate other than Charles Keller. Parochial patriotism would rise in arms against any other——"

"And will such a simpleton be elected?" asked Olivier Vinet, laughing.

The judge's deputy, a young fellow of three-and-twenty, the eldest son of a very famous public prosecutor, whose promotion dated from the Revolution of July, had, of course, been helped by his father's interest to get into the upper ranks of his profession. That father, still a public prosecutor, and returned as deputy by the town of Provins, is one of the buttresses of the Centre. Thus the son, whose mother had been a Mademoiselle Chargebœuf, had an assurance, alike in his official work and his demeanor, which proclaimed his father's influence. He expressed his opinions unhesitatingly on men and things, for he counted on not remaining long at Arcis, but on getting a place as public prosecutor at Versailles, the infallible stepping-stone to an appointment in Paris.

The free-and-easy air, and the sort of judicial conceit assumed by this personage on the strength of his certainty of "getting on," annoyed Frédéric Marest, and all the more because a very biting wit effectually supported his young subaltern's undisciplined freedom. The public prosecutor himself, a man of forty, who had waited six years under the Restoration to rise to the post of first deputy judge, and whom the Revolution of July had left stranded at Arcis, though he had eighteen thousand francs a year of his own, was always torn between his anxiety to win the good graces of the elder Vinet, who had every chance of becoming Keeper of the Seals —an office commonly conferred on a lawyer who sits in Parliament—and the necessity for preserving his own dignity. Olivier Vinet, a thin stripling, with fair hair and a colorless face, accentuated by a pair of mischievous greenish eyes, was one of those mocking spirits, fond of pleasure, who can at any moment assume the precise, pedantic, and rather abrupt manner which a magistrate puts on when in Court.

The burly public prosecutor, very stout and solemn, had, for a short time past, adopted a method by which, as he

hoped, to get the upper hand of this distracting youth: he treated him as a father treats a spoilt child.

"Olivier," said he to his deputy, patting him on the shoulder, "a man as clear-sighted as you are must see that Maître Giguet is likely enough to be elected. You might have blurted out that speech before the townsfolk instead of among friends."

"But there is one thing against Giguet," remarked Monsieur Martener.

This worthy young fellow, dull, but with very capable brains, the son of a doctor at Provins, owed his position to Vinet's father, who during the long years when he had been a pleader at Provins, had patronized the townsfolk there as the Comte de Gondreville did those of Arcis.

"What?" asked Antonin.

"Parochial feeling is tremendously strong against a man who is forced on the electors," replied the judge; "but when, in a place like Arcis, the alternative is the elevation of one of their equals, jealousy and envy get the upper hand even of local feeling."

"That seems simple enough," said the public prosecutor, "but it is perfectly true. If you could secure only fifty Ministerial votes, you would not unlikely find the first favorite here," and he glanced at Antonin Goulard.

"It will be enough to set up a candidate of the same calibre to oppose Simon Giguet," said Olivier Vinet.

The sous-préfet's face betrayed such satisfaction as could not escape the eye of either of his companions, with whom, indeed, he was on excellent terms. Bachelors all, and all well to do, they had without premeditation formed a defensive alliance to defy the dulness of a country town. The other three were already aware of Goulard's jealousy of Giguet, which a few words here will suffice to account for.

Antonin Goulard, whose father had been a huntsman in the service of the Simeuse family, enriched by investments in nationalized land, was, like Simon Giguet, a native of Arcis. Old Goulard left the Abbey of Valpreux—a corrup-

tion of Val-des-Preux—to live in the town after his wife's death, and sent his son Antonin to school at the Lycée Impérial, where Colonel Giguet had placed his boy. The two lads, after being school-fellows, went together to Paris to study law, and, their friendship persisting, they took their amusements together. They promised to help each other in life, since they adopted different branches of their profession; but fate decided that they were to become rivals.

In spite of his sufficiently evident personal advantages, and the cross of the Legion of Honor, which the Count had obtained for Goulard to compensate him for lack of promotion, and which he displayed at his button-hole, the offer of his heart and prospects had been civilly declined when, six months before the day when this narrative opens, Antonin had secretly called on Madame Beauvisage as her daughter's suitor. But no step of this kind is a secret in the country. Frédéric Marest, whose fortune, whose order, and whose position were the same three years before, had then been also dismissed on the score of disparity of years. Hence both Goulard and the public prosecutor were never more than strictly polite to the Beauvisages, and made fun of them between themselves.

As they walked just now, they both had guessed, and had told each other, the secret of Simon Giguet's candidature, for they had got wind, the night before, of Madame Marion's ambitions. Animated alike by the spirit of the dog in the manger, they were tacitly but heartily agreed in a determination to hinder the young lawyer from winning the wealthy heiress who had been refused to them.

"Heaven grant that I may be able to control the election!" said the sous-préfet, "and the Comte de Gondreville may get me appointed préfet, for I have no more wish to remain here than you have, though I am a native born."

"You have a very good opportunity of being elected deputy, sir," said Olivier Vinet to Marest. "Come and see my father, who will, no doubt, arrive at Provins within a few hours, and we will get him to have you nominated as the Ministerial candidate."

"Stay where you are," said Goulard. "The Ministry has ideas of its own as to its candidate——"

"Pooh! Why, there are two Ministries—one that hopes to control the election, and one that means to profit by it," said Vinet.

"Do not complicate Antonin's difficulties," replied Frédéric Marest, with a knowing wink to his deputy.

The four officials, now far away from the Avenue des Soupirs, crossed the market-place to the *Mulet* inn on seeing Poupart come out of Madame Marion's house. At that moment, in fact, the sixty-seven conspirators were pouring out of the carriage gate.

"And you have been into that house?" asked Antonin Goulard, pointing to the wall of the Marion's garden, backing on the Brienne road opposite the stables of the *Mulet.*

"And I go there no more, Monsieur le Sous-préfet," returned the innkeeper. "Monsieur Keller's son is dead; I have nothing more to do with it. God has made it his business to clear the way——"

"Well, Pigoult?" said Olivier Vinet, seeing the whole of the Opposition coming out from the meeting.

"Well," echoed the notary, on whose brow the moisture still testified to the energy of his efforts, "Sinot has just brought us news which resulted in unanimity. With the exception of five dissidents—Poupart, my grandfather, Mollot, Sinot and myself—they have all sworn, as at a game of tennis, to use every means in their power to secure the return of Simon Giguet—of whom I have made a mortal enemy.—We all got very heated! At any rate, I got the Giguets to fulminate against the Gondrevilles, so the old Count will side with me. Not later than to-morrow he shall know what the self-styled patriots of Arcis said about him, and his corruption, and his infamous conduct, so as to shake off his protection, or, as they say, his yoke."

"And they are unanimous?" said Vinet, with a smile.

"To-day," replied Monsieur Martener.

"Oh!" cried Pigoult, "the general feeling is in favor of

electing a man of the place. Whom can you find to set up in opposition to Simon Giguet, who has spent two mortal hours in preaching on the word Progress!"

"We can find old Grévin!" cried the sous-préfet.

"He has no ambition," said Pigoult. "But first and foremost we must consult the Count.—Just look," he went on, "how attentively Simon is taking care of that old noodle Beauvisage!"

And he pointed to the lawyer, who had the mayor by the arm, and was talking in his ear.

Beauvisage bowed right and left to all the inhabitants, who gazed at him with the deference of country townspeople for the richest man in the place.

"He treats him as a father—and mother!" remarked Vinet.

"Oh! he will do no good by buttering him up," replied Pigoult, who caught the hint conveyed in Vinet's retort. "Cécile's fate does not rest with either father or mother."

"With whom, then?"

"My old master. If Simon were the member for Arcis, he would be no forwarder in that matter."

Though the sous-préfet and Marest pressed Pigoult hard, they could get no explanation of this remark, which, as they shrewdly surmised, was big with meaning, and revealed some acquaintance with the intentions of the Beauvisage family.

All Arcis was in a pother, not only in consequence of the distressing news that had stricken the Gondrevilles, but also because of the great resolution voted at the Giguets'—where, at this moment, Madame Marion and the servants were hard at work restoring order, that everything might be in readiness for the company who would undoubtedly drop in as usual in the evening in full force, attracted by curiosity.

Champagne looks, and is, but a poor country. Its aspect is for the most party dreary, a dull plain. As you pass through the villages, or even the towns, you see none but shabby buildings of timber or concrete; the handsomest are of brick. Stone is scarcely used even for public build-

ings. At Arcis the château, the Palais de Justice, and the church are the only edifices constructed of stone. Nevertheless, the province—or, at any rate, the departments of the Aube, the Marne, and the Haute-Marne, rich in the vineyards which are famous throughout the world—also support many flourishing industries. To say nothing of the manufacturing centre at Reims, almost all the hosiery of every kind produced in France, a very considerable trade, is woven in and near Troyes. For ten leagues round, the country is inhabited by stocking-weavers, whose frames may be seen through the open doors as you pass through the hamlets. These workers deal through factors with the master speculator, who calls himself a manufacturer. The manufacturer sells to Paris houses, or more often, to retail hosiers, who stick up a sign proclaiming themselves manufacturing hosiers.

None of these middlemen ever made a stocking, or a nightcap, or a sock. A large proportion of such gear comes from Champagne—not all, for there are weavers in Paris who compete with the country workers.

These middlemen, coming between the producer and the consumer, are a curse not peculiar to this trade. It exists in most branches of commerce, and adds to the price of the goods all the profit taken by the intermediary. To do away with these expensive go-betweens, who hinder the direct sale of manufactured goods, would be a benevolent achievement, and the magnitude of the results would raise it to the level of a great political reform. Industry at large would be benefited, for it would bring about such a reduction of prices to the home-consumer as is needed to maintain the struggle against foreign competition, a battle as murderous as that of hostile armies.

But the overthrow of such an abuse as this would not secure to our modern philanthropists such glory or such profit as are to be obtained by fighting for the Dead Sea apples of negro emancipation, or the penitentiary system; hence this illicit commerce of the middleman, the producer's banker, will weigh for a long time yet on the workers and

consumers alike. In France—so clever as a nation—it is always supposed that simplification means destruction. We are still frightened by the Revolution of 1789.

The industrial energy that always thrives in a land where Nature is a grudging step-dame, sufficiently shows what progress agriculture would make there if only wealth would join its partnership with the land, which is not more barren in Champagne than in Scotland, where the outlay of capital has worked miracles. And when agriculture shall have conquered the unfertile tracts of that province, when industry shall have scattered a little capital on the chalk fields of Champagne, prosperity will multiply threefold. The land is, in fact, devoid of luxury, and the dwelling-houses are bare; but English comfort will find its way thither, money will acquire that rapid circulation which is half of what makes wealth, and which is now beginning in many of the torpid districts of France.

Writers, officials, the Church from its pulpits, the Press in its columns—all to whom chance has given any kind of influence over the masses—ought to proclaim it again and again: "Hoarding is a social crime." The miserliness of the provinces stagnates the vitality of the industrial mass, and impairs the health of the nation. The little town of Arcis, for instance, on the way to nowhere, and apparently sunk in complete quiescence, is comparatively rich in the possession of capital slowly amassed in the hosiery trade.

Monsieur Philéas Beauvisage was the Alexander—or, if you will, the Attila—of his native town. This is how that respectable and hardworking man had conquered the dominion of cotton. He was the only surviving child of the Beauvisages, long settled on the fine farm of Bellache, part of the Gondreville estate; and in 1811 his parents made a considerable sacrifice to save him from the conscription by purchasing a substitute. Then his mother, as a widow, had again, in 1813, rescued her only son from being enlisted in the Guards by the good offices of the Comte de Gondreville.

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In 1813 Philéas, then twenty-one, had for three years past been engaged in the pacific business of a hosier. The lease of the farm of Bellache having run out, the farmer's widow decided that she would not renew it. In fact, she foresaw ample occupation for her old age in watching the investment of her money.

That her later days might not be disturbed by anxiety, she had a complete valuation made by Monsieur Grévin, the notary, of all her husband's estate, though her son had made no claims on her; and his share was found to amount to about a hundred and fifty thousand francs. The good woman had not to sell her land, most of it purchased from Michu, the luckless steward of the Simeuse family. She paid her son in cash, advising him to buy up his master's business. This old Monsieur Pigoult was the son of the old justice of the peace, and his affairs were already in such disorder that his death, as has been hinted, was supposed to have been due to his own act.

Philéas Beauvisage, a prudent youth, with a proper respect for his mother, had soon concluded the bargain; and as he inherited from his parents the bump of acquisitiveness, as phrenologists term it, his youthful zeal was thrown into the business, which seemed to him immense, and which he proposed to extend by speculation.

The Christian name Philéas, which may, perhaps, seem extraordinary, was one of the many whimsical results of the Revolution. The Beauvisages, as connected with the Simeuses, and consequently good Catholics, had their infant baptized. The curé of Cinq-Cygne, the Abbé Goujet, being consulted by the farmers, advised them to take Philéas as his patron saint, his Greek name being likely to find favor in the eyes of the municipality, for the boy was born at a time when children were registered by the strange names in the Republican calendar.

In 1814, hosiery—as a rule, a fairly regular trade—was liable to all the ups and downs of the cotton market. The price of cotton depended on the Emperor's successes or de-

feats; his adversaries, the English generals in Spain, would say, "The town is ours; send up the bales." Pigoult, Philéas' retiring master, supplied his weavers in the country with yarns. At the time when he sold his business to young Beauvisage, he had in stock a large supply of cotton yarns, purchased when they were at the dearest, while cotton was now being brought in through Lisbon in vast quantities at six sous the kilogramme, in virtue of the Emperor's famous decree. The reaction in France, caused by the importation of this cheap cotton, brought about Pigoult's death, and laid the foundation of Beauvisage's fortune; for he, instead of losing his head like his old master, bought up twice as much cotton as his predecessor had in stock, and so struck a medium average price. This simple transaction enabled Philéas to triple his output of manufactured goods, while apparently a benefactor to the workers; and he could sell his produce in Paris and the provinces at a profit when others were merely recovering the cost price. By the beginning of 1814 his manufactured stock was exhausted.

The prospect of war on French soil, which would be especially disastrous to Champagne, made him cautious. He manufactured no more goods, and by realizing his capital in solid gold, stood prepared for the event. At that time the custom-houses were a dead letter. Napoleon had been obliged to enlist his thirty thousand customs officials to defend the country. Cotton, smuggled in through a thousand gaps in the hedge, was flung into every market. It is impossible to give an idea of the liveliness and cunning of cotton at that date, or of the avidity with which the English clutched at a country where cotton stockings were worth six francs a pair, and cambric shirts were an article of luxury.

Manufacturers on a smaller scale and the master workmen, counting on Napoleon's genius and luck, had invested in cotton coming through Spain. This they were working up, in the hope of presently dictating terms to the Paris retail shops. All this Philéas noted. Then, when the province was devastated by war, he stood between the army and Paris.

As each battle was lost he went to the weavers who had hidden their goods in casks—silos of hosiery—and, cash in hand, this Cossack of the trade, going from village to village, bought up, below cost price, these barrels of stockings, which might fall any day into the hands of foes whose feet wanted covering as badly as their throats wanted liquor.

At this period of disaster, Philéas displayed a degree of energy that was almost a match for the Emperor's. This captain of the hosiery trade fought the commercial campaign of 1814 with a courage that remains unrecognized. One league behind, wherever the General was one league in advance, he bought up cotton nightcaps and stockings as his trophies, while the Emperor in his reverses plucked immortal palms. The genius was equal in both, though exercised in widely different spheres, since one was eager to cover as many heads as the other hoped to fell. Compelled to create means of transport to save his casks full of stockings, which he stored in a Paris suburb, Philéas often requisitioned horses and wagons, as though the safety of the Empire depended on him. And was not the majesty of Trade as good as that of Napoleon? Had not the English merchants, after subsidizing Europe, got the upper hand of the giant who threatened their ships?

While the Emperor was abdicating at Fontainebleau, Philéas was the triumphant master of the "article." As a result of his clever manœuvres, the price of cotton was kept down, and he had doubled his fortune when many manufacturers thought themselves lucky to get rid of their goods at a loss of fifty per cent. He returned to Arcis with three hundred thousand francs, half of which, invested in the Funds, brought him fifteen thousand francs a year. One hundred thousand he used to double the capital needed for his business; and he spent the remainder in building, decorating, and furnishing a fine house in the Place du Pont, at Arcis.

On his return in triumph, the hosier naturally confided his story to Monsieur Grévin. The notary had a daughter

to marry, just twenty years of age. Grévin's father-in-law, who for forty years had practised as a doctor at Arcis, was at that time still alive. Grévin was a widower; he knew that old Madame Beauvisage was rich; he believed in the energy and capacity of a young man who had thus boldly utilized the campaign of 1814. Séverine Grévin's fortune from her mother was sixty thousand francs. What was old Dr. Varlet to leave her? As much again, at most! Grévin was already fifty; he was very much afraid of dying; he saw no chance, after the Restoration, of marrying his daughter as he would wish—for her he was ambitious.

Under these circumstances, he contrived to have it suggested to Philéas that he should propose for Séverine. Mademoiselle Grévin, well brought up and handsome, was regarded as one of the good matches of the town. Also, the connection with the most intimate friend of the Comte de Gondreville, who retained his dignity as a peer of France, was, of course, an honor for the son of one of the Gondreville farmers. The widow would, indeed, have made a sacrifice to achieve it. But when she heard that her son's suit was successful, she held her hand, and gave him nothing, an act of prudence in which the notary followed suit. And thus the marriage was brought about between the son of the farmer who had been so faithful to the Simeuses, and the daughter of one of their most determined enemies. This, perhaps, was the only instance in which Louis XVIII.'s motto found application—*"Union et oubli"* (union and oblivion).

When the Bourbons returned for the second time, old Dr. Varlet died, at the age of seventy-six, leaving in his cellar two hundred thousand francs in gold, besides other property valued at an equal sum. Thus, in 1816, Philéas and his wife found themselves possessed of thirty thousand francs a year, apart from the profits of the business; for Grévin wished to invest his daughter's money in land, and Beauvisage made no objection. The interest on Séverine Grévin's share of her grandfather's money amounted to scarcely fifteen thou-

sand francs a year, in spite of the good opportunities for investment which Grévin kept a lookout for.

The first two years of married life were enough to show Grévin and his daughter how incapable Philéas really was. The hawk's eye of commercial greed had seemed to be the effect of superior capacity, and the old notary had mistaken youthfulness for power, and luck for a talent for business. But though Philéas could read and write, and do sums to admiration, he had never read a book. Miserably ignorant, conversation with him was out of the question; he could respond by a deluge of commonplace, expressed pleasantly enough. But, as the son of a farmer, he was not wanting in commercial acumen.

Other men must be plain with him, clear and explicit; but he never was the same to his adversary.

Tender and kind-hearted, Philéas wept at the least touch of pathos. This made him reverent to his wife, whose superiority filled him with unbounded admiration. Séverine, a woman of brains, knew everything—according to Philéas. And she was all the more accurate in her judgments because she consulted her father on every point. Also, she had a very firm temper, and this made her absolute mistress in her own house. As soon as this point was gained, the old notary felt less regret at seeing his daughter happy through a mastery which is always gratifying to a wife of determined character. —Still, there was the woman!

This, it was said, was what befell the woman.

At the time of the reaction of 1815, a certain Vicomte de Chargebœuf, of the poorer branch, was appointed sous-préfet at Arcis by the influence of the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, to whom he was related. This young gentleman remained there as sous-préfet for five years. Handsome Madame Beauvisage, it was said, had something to do with the long stay—much too long for his advantage—made by the Vicomte in this small post. At the same time, it must at once be said that these hints were never justified by the scandals which betray such love-affairs, so difficult to conceal from the

Argus eyes of a small country town. "If Séverine loved the Vicomte de Chargebœuf, if he loved her, it was a blameless and honorable attachment," said all the friends of the Grévins and the Marions. And these two sets imposed their opinion on the immediate neighborhood. But the Grévins and the Marions had no influence over the Royalists, and the Royalists declared that the sous-préfet was a happy man.

As soon as the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne heard what was rumored as to her young relation, she sent for him to Cinq-Cygne; and so great was her horror of all who were ever so remotely connected with the actors in the judicial tragedy that had been so fatal to her family, that she desired the Viscount to live elsewhere. She got him appointed to Sancerre as sous-préfet, promising to secure his promotion. Some acute observers asserted that the Viscount had pretended to be in love, so as to be made préfet, knowing how deeply the Marquise hated the name of Grévin. Others, on the other hand, remarked on the coincidence of the Vicomte de Chargebœuf's visits to Paris with those made by Madame Beauvisage under the most trivial pretexts. An impartial historian would find it very difficult to form an opinion as to facts thus enwrapped in the mystery of private life.

A single circumstance seemed to turn the scale in favor of scandal. Cécile Renée Beauvisage was born in 1820, when Monsieur de Chargebœuf was leaving Arcis, and one of the sous-préfet's names was René. The name was given her by the Comte de Gondreville, her godfather. If the mother had raised any objection to her child's having that name, she might possibly have confirmed these suspicions; and as the world must always be in the right, this was supposed to be a little bit of mischief on the part of the old peer. Madame Keller, the Count's daughter, was the godmother, and her name was Cécile.

As to Cécile Renée Beauvisage's face, the likeness is striking!—not to her father or her mother; as time goes on, she has become the living image of the Viscount, even to his aristocratic manner. This likeness, moral and physical, has

however escaped the ken of the good folks of Arcis, for the Vicomte never returned there.

At any rate, Séverine made Philéas happy in his own way. He was fond of good living and the comforts of life; she gave him the choicest wines, a table fit for a bishop, catered for by the best cook in the department; but she made no display of luxury, keeping house in the style required by the plain citizens of Arcis. It was a saying at Arcis that you should dine with Madame Beauvisage, and spend the evening with Madame Marion.

The importance to which the House of Cinq-Cygne was at once raised by the Restoration had naturally tightened the bonds that held together all the families in the district who had been in any way concerned in the trial as to the temporary disappearance of Gondreville. The Marions, the Grévins, and the Giguets held together all the more closely because, to secure the triumph of their so-called constitutional party at the coming elections, harmonious co-operation would be necessary.

Séverine, of aforethought, kept Beauvisage busy with his hosiery trade, from which any other man might have retired, sending him to Paris or about the country on business. Indeed, till 1830, Philéas, who thus found work for his bump of acquisitiveness, earned every year as much as he spent, besides the interest on his capital, while taking things easy and doing his work *in slippers,* as they say. Hence, the interest and fortune of Monsieur and Madame Beauvisage, invested for fifteen years past by the constant care of old Grévin, would amount, in 1830, to five hundred thousand francs. This, in fact, was at that time Cécile's marriage-portion; and the old notary invested it in three and a half per cents bought at fifty, and so yielding thirty thousand francs a year. So no one was mistaken when estimating the fortune of the Beauvisages at a guess at eighty thousand francs a year.

In 1830 they sold the business to Jean Violette, one of their agents, the grandson of one of the most important

witnesses for the prosecution in the Simeuse trial, and had invested the purchase-money, estimated at three hundred thousand francs. And Monsieur and Madame Beauvisage had still in prospect the money that would come to them from old Grévin and from the old farmer's widow, each supposed to be worth fifteen to twenty thousand francs a year.

These great provincial fortunes are the product of time multiplied by economy. Thirty years of old age are in themselves a capital. Even if they gave Cécile a portion of fifty thousand francs a year, Monsieur and Madame Beauvisage would still inherit two fortunes, besides keeping thirty thousand francs a year and their house at Arcis.

As soon as the old Marquise de Cinq-Cygne should die, Cécile would be an acceptable match for the young Marquis; but that lady's health—strong, and almost handsome still at the age of sixty—negatived any such hope, if, indeed, it had ever entered into the mind of Grévin and his daughter, as some persons asserted who were surprised at the rejection of suitors so eligible as the sous-préfet and the public prosecutor.

The house built by Beauvisage, one of the handsomest in Arcis, stands in the Place du Pont, in a line with the Rue Vide-Bourse, and at the corner of the Rue du Pont, which slopes up to the Church Square. Though, like many provincial town-houses, it has neither forecourt nor garden, it has a rather good effect in spite of some bad taste in the decorations. The house door—a double door—opens from the street. The windows on the ground floor overlook the *Poste* inn, on the street side, and on the side towards the Square have a view of the picturesque reaches of the Aube, which is navigable below this bridge. On the other side of the bridge is a corresponding place or square. Here stood Monsieur Grévin's house, and here begins the road to Sézanne.

The Maison Beauvisage, carefully painted white, might pass for being built of stone. The height of the windows, and the enriched outside mouldings, contribute to give the

building a certain style, enhanced, no doubt, by the poverty-stricken appearance of most of the houses in the town, constructed as they are of timber, and coated with stucco made to imitate stone. Still, even these dwellings have a stamp of originality, since each architect, or each owner, has exerted his ingenuity to solve the problems of this mode of construction.

On each of the open spaces at either end of the bridge, an example may be seen of this peculiar architecture. In the middle of the row of houses in the square, to the left of the Maison Beauvisage, may be seen the frail shop—the walls painted plum-color, and the woodwork green—occupied by Jean Violette, grandson of the famous farmer of Grouage, one of the chief witnesses in the case of the senator's disappearance; to him, in 1830, Beauvisage had made over his connection and his stock-in-trade, and, it was said, had lent him capital.

The bridge of Arcis is of timber. At about a hundred yards above this bridge the current is checked by another bridge supporting the tall wooden buildings of a mill with several wheels. The space between the road bridge and this private dam forms a pool, on each side of which stand some good houses. Through a gap, and over the roofs, the hill is seen where stands the Château d'Arcis, with its gardens, its paddock, its surrounding walls and trees, commanding the upper river of the Aube and the poor meadows of the left bank.

The noise of the water tumbling over the dam behind the foot-bridge to the mills, and the hum of the wheels as they thrash the water ere it falls into the pool in cascades, make the street above the bridge quite lively, in contrast with the silence of the stream where it flows below between Monsieur Grévin's garden, his house being next to the bridge on the left bank, and the quay on the right bank, where boats unload, in front of a row of poor but picturesque houses. The Aube meanders in the distance between trees, singly or in groups, tall or stumpy, and of various kinds, according to the caprice of the residents.

The character of the buildings is so various that the tourist might find a specimen representative of every country. On the north side of the pool, where ducks sport and gobble in the water, there is, for instance, an almost southern-looking house with an incurved roof covered with pan-tiles, such as are used in Italy; on one side of it is a small garden plot on the quay in which vines grow over a trellis, and two or three trees. It recalls some corner of Rome, where, on the banks of the Tiber, houses of this type may be seen. Opposite, on the other shore, is a large dwelling with a pent-house roof and balconies like those of a Swiss châlet; to complete the illusion, between it and the weir lies a wide meadow, planted with poplars on each side of a narrow graveled path. And, crowning the town, the buildings of the château, looking all the more imposing as it stands up amid such frail structures, seem to represent the grandeur of the old French aristocracy.

Though the two squares at the ends of the bridge are intersected by the Sézanne road, an abominable road too, and very ill kept, and though they are the liveliest spots in the town—for the offices of the Justice of the Peace and of the Mayor of Arcis are both in the Rue Vide-Bourse—a Parisian would think the place strangely rustic and deserted. The landscape is altogether artless; standing on the square by the bridge, opposite the *Poste* inn, a farmyard pump is to be seen; to be sure, for nearly half a century a similar one commanded our admiration in the grand courtyard of the Louvre.

Nothing can more aptly illustrate provincial life than the utter silence that reigns in this little town, even in its busiest quarter. It may easily be supposed how agitating is the presence of a stranger, even if he stays but half a day, and what eager faces lean from every window to watch him; and, then, picture the chronic espionage exercised by the residents over each other. Life becomes so nearly monastic that excepting on Sundays and fête-days, a visitor will not meet a creature on the Boulevards or in the Avenue des Soupirs—nowhere, in short, not even in the streets.

It will now be obvious why the front of Monsieur Beauvisage's house was in a line with the street and the square: the square served as a forecourt. As he sat at the window, the retired hosier could get a raking view of the Church Square, of those at the two ends of the bridge, and of the Sézanne road. He could see the coaches and travelers arrive at the *Hôtel de la Poste.* And on days when the Court was sitting, he could see the stir in front of the Justice-house and the Mairie. And, indeed, Beauvisage would not have exchanged his house for the château in spite of its lordly appearance, its stone masonry, and its commanding position.

On entering the house, you found yourself in a hall, and facing a staircase beyond. On the right was a large drawing-room, with two windows to the square, on the left a handsome dining-room looking on to the street. The bedrooms were on the first floor.

In spite of their wealth, the Beauvisage household consisted of the cook and a housemaid, a peasant woman who washed, ironed, and cleaned, not often being required to wait on madame and mademoiselle, who waited on each other to fill up their time. Since the hosiery business had been sold, the horse and trap, formerly used by Philéas, and kept at the inn, had also been disposed of.

Just as Philéas went in, his wife, who had been informed of the resolution passed at the meeting, had put on her boots and her shawl to call on her father; for she rightly guessed that in the course of the evening Madame Marion would throw out some hints preliminary to proposing Simon for Cécile.

After telling her about Charles Keller's death, Philéas asked her opinion with a simplicity that proved a habit of respecting Séverine's views on all subjects.

"What do you say to that, wife?" said he, and then sat down to await her reply.

In 1839 Madame Beauvisage, though forty-four years of

age, still looked so young, that she might have been the "double" of Mademoiselle Mars. If the reader can remember the most charming Célimène ever seen on the stage of the *Français,* he may form an exact idea of Séverine Beauvisage. There were in both the same roundness of form, the same beautiful features, the same finished outline; but the hosier's wife was too short, and thus missed the dignified grace, the coquettish air *à la Sévigné,* which dwell in the memory of those who have lived through the Empire and the Restoration. And then provincial habits, and the careless way of dressing which Séverine had allowed herself to drift into for ten years past, gave a common look to that handsome profile and fine features, and she had grown stout, which disfigured what for the first twelve years of her married life had been really a magnificent person. Séverine's imperfections were redeemed by a queenly glance, full of pride and command, and by a turn of the head that asserted her dignity. Her hair, still black, long, and thick, crowning her head with a broad plait, gave her a youthful look. Her shoulders and bosom were as white as snow, but all too full and puffy, spoiling the lines of the throat, and making it too short. Her arms, too stout and dimpled, ended in hands which, though pretty and small, were too plump. She was so overfull of life and health, that the flesh, in spite of all her care, made a little roll above her shoe. A pair of earrings without pendants, each worth a thousand crowns, adorned her ears.

She had on a lace cap with pink ribbons, a morning gown of *mousseline de laine,* striped in pink and gray, and trimmed with green, opening over a petticoat with a narrow frill of Valenciennes edging, and a green Indian shawl, of which the point hung to the ground. Her feet did not seem comfortable in their bronze kid boots.

"You cannot be so hungry," said she, looking at her husband, "but that you can wait half an hour. My father will have finished dinner, but I cannot eat mine in comfort till I know what he thinks, and whether we ought to go out to Gondreville——"

"Yes, yes, go, my dear; I can wait," said the hosier.

"Bless me! shall I never cure you of addressing me as *tu?*"* she exclaimed, with a meaning shrug.

"I have never done so in company by any chance—since 1817," replied Philéas.

"But you constantly do so before your daughter and the servants——"

"As you please, Séverine," said Beauvisage dejectedly.

"Above all things, do not say a word to Cécile about the resolution of the electors," added Madame Beauvisage, who was looking at herself in the glass while arranging her shawl.

"Shall I go with you to see your father?" asked Philéas.

"No; stay with Cécile.—Besides, Jean Violette is to call to-day to pay the rest of the money he owes you. He will bring you his twenty thousand francs. This is the third time he has asked for three months' grace; grant him no more time, and if he cannot pay up, take his note of hand to Courtet the bailiff; we must do things regularly, and apply to the Court. Achille Pigoult will tell you how to get the money. That Violette is the worthy descendant of his grandfather! I believe him quite capable of making money out of a bankruptcy. He has no sense of honor or justice."

"He is a very clever fellow," said Beauvisage.

"You handed over to him a connection and stock-in-trade that were well worth fifty thousand francs for thirty thousand, and in eight years he has only paid you ten thousand——"

"I never had the law of any man," replied Beauvisage, "and would rather lose my money than torment the poor fellow——"

"A poor fellow who is making a fool of you."

Beauvisage was silent. Finding nothing to say in reply to this brutal remark, he stared at the drawing-room floor.

* *Tu* (thou) instead of *vous* (you) is used in domestic and familiar intercourse.—*Translator.*

The gradual extinction of Beauvisage's intellect was perhaps due to too much sleep. He was in bed every night by eight o'clock, and remained there till eight next morning, and for twenty years had slept for twelve hours on end without ever waking; or, if such a serious event should supervene, it was to him the most extraordinary fact—he would talk about it all day. He then spent about an hour dressing, for his wife had drilled him into never appearing in her presence at breakfast till he was shaved, washed, and properly dressed.

When he was in business he went off after breakfast to attend to it, and did not come in till dinner-time. Since 1832 he would call on his father-in-law instead, and take a walk, or pay visits in the town. He always was seen in boots, blue cloth trousers, a white waistcoat, and a blue coat, the dress insisted on by his wife. His linen was exquisitely fine and white, Séverine requiring him to have a clean shirt every day. This care of his person, so unusual in the country, contributed to the respect in which he was held, as in Paris we remark a man of fashion.

Thus the outer man ofthis worthy and solemn night-cap seller denoted a person of worship; and his wife was too shrewd ever to have said a word that could let the public of Arcis into the secret of her disappointment and of her husband's ineptitude; while he, by dint of smiles, obsequious speeches, and airs of wealth, passed muster as a man of great importance. It was reported that Séverine was so jealous that she would not allow him to go out in the evening, while Philéas was expressing roses and lilies for his complexion under the weight of blissful slumbers.

Beauvisage, whose life was quite to his mind, cared for by his wife, well served by the two maids, and petted by his daughter, declared himself—and was—the happiest man in Arcis. Séverine's feeling for her commonplace husband was not without the hue of protective pity that a mother feels for her children. She disguised the stern remarks she felt called upon to make to him under a jesting tone. There was not a more peaceful household; and Philéas' dislike to com-

pany, which sent him to sleep, as he could not play any games of cards, had left Séverine free to dispose of her evenings.

Cécile's entrance put an end to her father's embarrassment. He looked up.

"How fine you are!" he exclaimed.

Madame Beauvisage turned round sharply with a piercing look at her daughter, who blushed under it.

"Why, Cécile! who told you to dress up in that style?" asked the mother.

"Are we not going to Madame Marion's this evening? I dressed to see how my gown fits."

"Cécile, Cécile!" said Séverine, "why try to deceive your mother? It is not right; I am not pleased with you. You are trying to hide something——"

"Why, what has she done?" asked Beauvisage, enchanted to see his daughter so fresh and smart.

"What has she done? I will tell her," said the mother, threatening her only child with an ominous finger.

Cécile threw her arms round her mother's neck, hugged and petted her, which, in an only child, is a sure way of winning the day.

Cécile Beauvisage, a young lady of nineteen, had dressed herself in a pale gray silk frock, trimmed with *brandenburgs* of a darker shade to look in front like a coat. The body, with its buttons and jockey tails, formed a point in front, and laced up the back, like stays. This sort of *corset* fitted exactly to the line of the back, hips and bust. The skirt, with three rows of narrow fringe, hung in pretty folds, and the cut and style proclaimed the hand of a Paris dressmaker. A light handkerchief trimmed with lace was worn over the body. The heiress had knotted a pink kerchief round her throat, and wore a straw hat with a moss rose in it. She had fine black netted mittens and bronze kid boots; in short, but for a certain "Sunday-best" effect, this turnout, as of a figure in a fashion-plate, could not fail to charm her father and mother. And Cécile was a pretty girl, of medium height,

and well proportioned. Her chestnut hair was dressed in the fashion of the day, in two thick plaits, forming loops on each side of her face, and fastened up at the back of her head. Her face, bright with health, had the aristocratic stamp which she had not inherited from her father or her mother. Thus her clear brown eyes had not a trace of the soft, calm, almost melancholy look so common in young girls. Sprightly, quick, and healthy, Cécile destroyed the romantic cast of her features by a sort of practical homeliness and the freedom of manner often seen in spoilt children. At the same time, a husband who should be capable of recommencing her education and effacing the traces of a provincial life, might extract a charming woman from this rough-hewn marble.

In point of fact, Séverine's pride of her daughter had counteracted the effects of her love for her. Madame Beauvisage had had firmness enough to bring her daughter up well; she had assumed a certain severity which exacted obedience and eradicated the little evil that was indigenous in the child's soul. The mother and daughter had never been separated; and Cécile was blessed with what is rarer among girls than is commonly supposed—perfect and unblemished purity of mind, innocence of heart, and genuine guilelessness.

"Your dress is highly suggestive," said Madame Beauvisage. "Did Simon Giguet say anything to you yesterday which you did not confide to me?"

"Well, well!" said Philéas, "a man who is to be the representative to his fellow-citizens——"

"My dear mamma," said Cécile in her mother's ear, "he bores me to death—but there is not another man in Arcis!"

"Your opinion of him is quite correct. But wait till we know what your grandfather thinks," said Madame Beauvisage, embracing her daughter, whose reply betrayed great good sense, though it showed that her innocence had been tarnished by a thought of marriage.

Monsieur Grévin's house, situated on the opposite bank of the river, at the corner of the little Place beyond the

bridge, was one of the oldest in the town. It was built of wood, the interstices between the timbers being filled up with pebbles, and it was covered with a smooth coating of cement painted stone-color. In spite of this coquettish artifice, it looked, all the same, like a house built of cards.

The garden, lying along the river bank, had a terrace wall with vases for flower-pots.

This modest dwelling, with its stout wooden shutters painted stone-color like the walls, was furnished with a simplicity to correspond with the exterior. On entering you found yourself in a small pebbled courtyard, divided from the garden by a green trellis. On the ground floor the old notary's office had been turned into a drawing-room, with windows looking out on the river and the square, furnished with very old and very faded green Utrecht velvet. The lawyer's study was now his dining-room. Everything bore the stamp of the owner, the philosophical old man who led one of those lives that flow like the waters of a country stream, the envy of political harlequins when at last their eyes are opened to the vanity of social distinctions, and when they are tired of a mad struggle with the tide of human affairs.

While Séverine is making her way across the bridge to see if her father has finished his dinner, it may be well to give a few minutes' study to the person, the life, and the opinions of the old man whose friendship with the Comte Malin de Gondreville secured him the respect of the whole neighborhood. This is the plain unvarnished tale of the notary who for a long time had been, to all intents and purposes, the only notary in Arcis.

In 1787 two youths set out from Arcis with letters of recommendation to a member of the Council named Danton. This famous revolutionary was a native of Arcis. His house is still shown, and his family still lives there. This may perhaps account for the influence of the Revolution being so strongly felt in that part of the province.

Danton articled his young fellow-countrymen to a lawyer of the Châtelet, who became famous for an action against

the Comte Morton de Chabrillant concerning his box at the theatre on the occasion of the first performance of the *Mariage de Figaro,* when the *Parlement* took the lawyer's side as considering itself insulted in the person of its legal representative.

One of the young men was named Malin, and the other Grévin; each was an only son. Malin's father was at that time the owner of the house in which Grévin was now living. They were mutually and faithfully attached. Malin, a shrewd fellow, with good brains and high ambitions, had the gift of eloquence. Grévin, honest and hardworking, made it his business to admire Malin.

They returned to the country when the Revolution began; Malin as a pleader at Troyes, Grévin to be a notary at Arcis. Grévin, always Malin's humble servant, got him returned as deputy to the Convention; Malin had Grévin appointed prosecuting magistrate at Arcis. Until the 9th Thermidor, Malin remained unknown; he always voted with the strong to crush the weak; but Tallien showed him the necessity for crushing Robespierre. Then in that terrific parliamentary battle, Malin distinguished himself; he showed courage at the right moment.

From that day he began to play a part as a politician; he was one of the heroes of the rank and file; he deserted from the party of the "Thermidoriens" to join that of the "Clichyens," and was one of the Council of Elders. After allying himself with Talleyrand and Fouché to conspire against Bonaparte, he—with them—became one of Bonaparte's most ardent partisans after the victory of Marengo. Appointed tribune, he was one of the first to be elected to the Council of State, worked at the revision of the Code, and was soon promoted to senatorial dignity with the title of Comte de Gondreville.

This was the political side of their career. Now for the financial side.

Grévin was the most active and most crafty instrument of the Comte de Gondreville's fortune in the district of

Arcis. The estate of Gondreville had belonged to the Simeuse family, a good old house of provincial nobility, decimated by the guillotine, of which the two surviving heirs, both young soldiers, were serving in Condé's army. The estate, sold as nationalized land, was purchased by Grévin for Malin, under Marion's name. Grévin, in fact, acquired for his friend the larger part of the Church lands sold by the Republic in the department of the Aube. Malin sent the sums necessary for these purchases, not forgetting a bonus to the agent. When, presently, the Directory was supreme—by which time Malin was a power in the Republic—the sales were taken up in his name.

Then Grévin was a notary, and Malin in the Council of State; Grévin became Mayor of Arcis, Malin was Senator and Comte de Gondreville. Malin married the daughter of a millionaire army-contractor; Grévin married the only daughter of Monsieur Varlet, the leading doctor in Arcis. The Comte de Gondreville had three hundred thousand francs a year, a fine house in Paris, and the splendid château of Gondreville. One of his daughters married a Paris banker, one of the Kellers; the other became the wife of Marshal the Duc de Carigliano.

Grévin, a rich man too, with fifteen thousand francs a year, owned the house where he was now peacefully ending his days in strict economy, having managed his friend's business for him, and bought this house from him for six thousand francs. The Comte de Gondreville was eighty years of age, and Grévin seventy-six. The peer, taking his walk in his park, the old notary in what had been that peer's father's garden, each in his warm morning wrapper, hoarded crown upon crown. Not a cloud had chequered this friendship of sixty years. The notary had always been subservient to the Member of the Convention, the Councillor of State, the Senator, the Peer of France.

After the Revolution of July, Malin, being in Arcis, had said to Grévin:

"Would you care to have the Cross?" (of the Legion of Honor).

"And what would I do with it?" replied Grévin.

Neither had ever failed the other. They had always advised and informed each other without envy on one side or arrogance or offensive airs on the other. Malin had always been obliged to do his best for Grévin, for all Grévin's pride was in the Comte de Gondreville. Grévin was as much the Comte de Gondreville as Malin himself. At the same time, since the Revolution of July, when Grévin, already an old man, had given up the management of the Count's affairs, and when the Count, failing from age and from the part he had played in so many political storms, was settling down to a quiet life, the old men—sure of each other's regard, but no longer needing each other's help—had met but rarely. On his way to his country place or on his return journey to Paris, the Count would call on Grévin, who paid the Count a visit or two while he was at Gondreville.

Their children were scarcely acquainted. Neither Madame Keller, nor the Duchesse de Carigliano, had ever formed any intimacy with Mademoiselle Grévin either before or since her marriage to Beauvisage the hosier. This scorn, whether apparent or real, greatly puzzled Séverine. Grévin, as Mayor of Arcis under the Empire, a man kind and helpful to all, had, in the exercise of his power, conciliated and overcome many difficulties. His good humor, bluntness, and honesty had won the regard and affection of his district; and besides, everybody respected him as a man who could command the favor, the power, and the influence of the Comte de Gondreville.

By this time, however, when the notary's active participation in public business was a thing of the past, when for eight years he had been almost forgotten in the town of Arcis, and his death might be expected any day, Grévin, like his old friend Malin, vegetated rather than lived. He never went beyond his garden; he grew his flowers, pruned his trees, inspected his vegetables and his grafts—like all old men, he seemed to practise being a corpse. His life was as regular as clockwork. Like his friend Colonel Giguet, he was up

with the sun and in bed before nine; he was as frugal as a miser, and drank very little wine—but it was the best. He allowed himself coffee, but never touched liqueurs, and took no exercise but that involved in gardening.

In all weathers he wore the same clothes: heavy shoes, oiled to keep out the wet, loose worsted stockings, thick gray flannel trousers strapped round the waist, without braces; a wide waistcoat of thin sky-blue cloth with horn buttons, and a coat of gray flannel to match the trousers. On his head he wore a little round beaver-skin cap, which he never took off in the house. In the summer a black velvet cap took the place of the fur cap, and he wore an iron-gray cloth coat instead of the thick flannel one.

He was of medium height, and stout, as a healthy old man should be, which made him move a little heavily; his pace was slow, as is natural to men of sedentary habits. Up by daybreak, he made the most careful and elaborate toilet; he shaved himself, he walked round his garden, he looked at the weather and consulted the barometer, opening the drawing-room shutters himself. He hoed, he raked, he hunted out the caterpillars—he would always find occupation till breakfast time. After breakfast he devoted two hours to digestion, thinking—of heaven knows what. Almost every day, between two and five, his granddaughter came to see him, sometimes brought by the maid, and sometimes by her mother.

There were days when this mechanical routine was upset. He had to receive the farmers' rents, and payments in kind, to be at once resold; but this little business was but once a month on a market-day. What became of the money? No one knew, not even Séverine or Cécile; on that point Grévin was as mute as the confessional. Still, all the old man's feelings had in the end centered in his daughter and his grandchild; he really loved them more than his money.

This septuagenarian, so neat in his person, with his round face, his bald forehead, his blue eyes and thin white hair, had a tinge of despotism in his temper, as men have when they have met with no resistance from men and things. His



only great fault, and that deeply hidden, for nothing had ever called it into play, was a persistent and terrible vindictiveness, a rancor which Malin had never roused. Grévin had always been at Malin's service, but he had always found him grateful; the Count had never humiliated or offended his friend, whose nature he knew thoroughly. The two men still called each other *tu*, as in their boyhood, and still affectionately shook hands. The Senator had never allowed Grévin to feel the difference in their positions; he always anticipated the wishes of his old comrade, and offered him all, knowing that he would be content with little. Grévin, who was devoted to classical literature, a purist in taste, and a good lawyer, was deeply and widely learned in legal studies; he had done work for Malin which won the editor of the *Code* much honor in the Council of State.

Séverine was affectionately attached to her father; she and her daughter never left the making of his linen to any one else. They knitted his winter stockings, and watched his health with minute care. And Grévin knew that no thought of self-interest mingled with their love for him; a possible inheritance of a million francs would not dry their tears, and old men are keenly alive to disinterested affection. Before leaving the good man's house, every day Séverine or Cécile inquired as to what his dinner was to be next day, and sent him early vegetables from market.

Madame Beauvisage had always wished that her father should introduce her at the Château de Gondreville to make acquaintance with the Count's daughters; but the prudent old man had frequently explained to her how difficult it would be to keep up any connection with the Duchesse de Carigliano, who lived in Paris, and seldom came to Gondreville, or with a woman of fashion, like Madame Keller, when she herself had a hosier's shop at Arcis.

"Your life is settled," said Grévin to his daughter. "Place all your hopes of enjoyment in Cécile, who, when you give up business, will certainly be rich enough to give you the free and handsome style of living that you deserve Choose a

son-in-law who has ambitions and brains, and then you can some day go to Paris and leave that simpleton Beauvisage here. If I should live long enough to have a grandson-in-law, I will steer you over the sea of politics as I steered Malin, and you shall rise as high as the Kellers."

These words, spoken before the Revolution of 1830, and one year after the old notary had established himself in his little house, account for his calm existence. Grévin wished to live; he wished to start his daughter, his granddaughter, and his great-grandchildren on the highroad to greatness. Grévin was ambitious for the third generation.

When he made that speech the old man was thinking of seeing Cécile married to Charles Keller, and at this moment he was mourning over his disappointed hopes: he did not know what determination to come to.

He had no connections in Paris society; and seeing nobody else whom Cécile could advantageously marry but the young Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, he was wondering whether by sheer force of gold he might not smooth away the difficulties raised by the Revolution of July between the Royalists who were faithful to their principles and their conquerors. In fact, it seemed to him that there would be so little chance of happiness for Cécile if she fell into the hands of the Marquise de Cinq-Cynge, that he made up his mind to leave it to time to settle matters—that trusted friend of the aged. He hoped that his arch-enemy the Marquise might die, and then he thought he could capture the son through the grandfather, old Hauteserre, who was living with them at Cinq-Cygne, and whom he knew to be open to the bribery of his avarice. If this scheme should fail, when Cécile Beauvisage should be two-and-twenty with no hope of success, Grévin would consult his friend Gondreville, and leave him to find her a husband in Paris, in accordance with her taste or ambition, among the dukes of the Empire.

Séverine found her father sitting on a wooden bench at the end of his terrace, under the blossoming lilacs, and taking his coffee, for it was half-past five. She saw at once by

the sorrowful gravity of her father's expression that he had heard the news. In fact, the old Count had sent a man-servant to beg his friend to go to him. Hitherto, Grévin had been unwilling to encourage his daughter's hopes; but now, in the conflict of mingled considerations that struggled in his sorrowful mind, his secret slipped out.

"My dear child," said he, "I had dreamed of such splendid and noble prospects for your future life, and death has upset them all. Cécile might have been the Vicomtesse Keller; for Charles, by my management, would have been elected member for Arcis, and he would certainly some day have succeeded his father as peer. Neither Gondreville nor Madame Keller, his daughter, would have sneezed at Cécile's sixty thousand francs a year, especially with the added prospect of a hundred thousand more which will come to you some day. You could have lived in Paris with your daughter, and have played your part as mother-in-law in the higher spheres of power."

Madame Beauvisage nodded approval.

"But we are struck down by the blow that has killed this charming young man, who had already made a friend of the Prince.—And this Simon Giguet, who is pushing forward on the political stage, is a fool, a fool of the worst kind, for he believes himself an eagle.—You are too intimate with the Giguets and the Marion family to refuse the alliance without a great show of reason, but you must refuse——"

"We are, as usual, quite agreed, my dear father."

"All this necessitates my going to see my old friend Malin; in the first place, to comfort him; and in the second place, to consult him.—You and Cécile would be miserable with an old family of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; they would make you feel your humble birth in a thousand little ways. What we must look out for is one of Napoleon's dukes who is in want of money; then we can get a fine title for Cécile, and we will tie up her fortune.

"You can say that I have arranged for the disposal of Cécile's hand, and that will put an end to all such impertinent

proposals as Antonin Goulard's. Little Vinet is sure to come forward; and of all the suitors who will nibble at her fortune, he is the preferable. He is clever, pushing, and connected through his mother with the Chargebœufs. But he is too determined not to be master, and he is young enough to make her love him; between the two you would be done for. —I know what you are, my child!"

"I shall feel very much embarrassed this evening at the Marions," said Séverine.

"Well, my dear, send Madame Marion to me. I will talk to her!"

"I knew that you were planning for our future, dear father, but I had no idea that it would be anything so brilliant," said Madame Beauvisage, taking her father's hands and kissing them.

"I have planned so deeply," replied Grévin, "that in 1831 I bought a house you know very well—the Hôtel Beauséant——"

Madame Beauvisage started with surprise at hearing this well-kept secret, but she did not interrupt her father.

"It will be my wedding gift," he added. "I let it in 1832 to some English, for seven years, at twenty-four thousand francs a year—a good stroke of business, for it only cost me three hundred and twenty-five thousand, and I have got back nearly two hundred thousand. The lease is out on the 15th of July next."

Séverine kissed her father on the forehead and on both cheeks. This last discovery promised such splendor in the future that she was dazzled.

"If my father takes my advice," said she to herself, as she recrossed the bridge, "he will leave the property only in reversion to his grandchildren, and I shall have the life-interest; I do not wish that my daughter and her husband should turn me out of their house; they shall live in mine."

At dessert, when the maids were dining in the kitchen, and Madame Beauvisage was sure of not being overheard, she thought it well to give Cécile a little lecture.

"My dear child," said she, "behave this evening as a well-brought-up girl should; and henceforth try to have a quiet reserved manner; do not chatter too freely, nor walk about alone with Monsieur Giguet, or Monsieur Olivier Vinet, or the Sous-préfet, or Monsieur Martener—or anybody, in short, not even Achille Pigoult. You will never marry any young man of Arcis or of the department. Your fate will be to shine in Paris. You shall have some pretty dresses for every-day wear, to accustom you to being elegant; and I will try to bribe some waiting-woman of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's to find out where the Princesse de Cadignan and the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne buy their things. Oh, we will not look in the least provincial! You must practise the piano three hours a day, and I will have Moïse over from Troyes every day till I can find out about a master who will come from Paris. You must cultivate all your talents, for you have not more than a year before you at most before getting married.—So, now, I have warned you, and I shall see how you conduct yourself this evening. You must keep Simon at arm's length without making him ridiculous."

"Be quite easy, ma'am, I will begin at once to adore the Unknown."

This speech, which made Madame Beauvisage smile, needs a word of explanation.

"Ah, I have not seen him yet," said Philéas, "but everybody is talking of him. When I want to know who he is, I will send the sergeant or Monsieur Groslier to inspect his passport."

There is not a country town in France where sooner or later the Comedy of the Stranger is not played. The Stranger is not unfrequently an adventurer who takes the natives in, and goes off, carrying with him a woman's reputation or a family cash-box. More often he is really a stranger, whose life is a mystery for long enough to set the town talking of his acts and deeds.

Now, the possible accession of Simon Giguet to representative power was not the only great event of the day. The at-

tention of the citizens of Arcis had been much engaged by the proceedings of an individual who had arrived three days previously, and who was, as it happened, the first Stranger to the rising generation. Hence, the *Unknown* was the chief subject of conversation in every family circle. He was the log that had dropped from the clouds into a community of frogs.

The position of Arcis-sur-Aube sufficiently accounts for the effect that the advent of a visitor was likely to produce. Within six leagues from Troyes, by a farm called La Belle-Étoile, on the highway from Paris, a country road turns off, leading to the town of Arcis, across the wide flats where the Seine traces a narrow green valley, shaded with poplars, in sharp contrast to the white chalky marl of the soil. The road from Arcis to Troyes is also about six leagues long, and forms the chord of an arc with Arcis and Troyes at either end, so that the shortest way from Paris is by the cross-road turning off by La Belle-Étoile. The river Aube, as has been said, is not navigable above Arcis; and so this town, at six leagues from the main road, divided from Troyes by a monotonous level, lies lost in a desert, as it were, with no traffic or trade by land or water. Sézanne, at some leagues from Arcis on the other side of the river, stands on a highroad which shortens, by eight stages, the old post road to Germany, *via* Troyes. Thus, Arcis is isolated; no mails pass through the town; there is only a service of coaches to La Belle-Étoile on one hand, and to Troyes on the other.

All the residents know each other, and they know every commercial traveler who comes on business from the Paris houses; thus, as in every small town in a similar position, the arrival of a stranger in Arcis sets every tongue wagging, and excites every imagination, if he should stay more than two days without announcing his name and his business.

Now, while Arcis was still stagnantly peaceful, three days before that on which—by the fiat of the creator of so many fictions—this story begins, everybody had witnessed the arrival, by the road from La Belle-Étoile, of a Stranger, in

a neat tilbury, driving a well-bred horse, and followed by a tiger no bigger than your thumb, mounted on a saddle-horse. The coach in connection with the mails for Troyes had brought from La Belle-Étoile three trunks from Paris, with no name on them, but belonging to the newcomer, who took rooms at the *Mulet*. Everybody in Arcis that evening supposed that this individual wanted to purchase land at Arcis, and he was spoken of in many family councils as the future owner of the château.

The tilbury, the traveler, the tiger, and the steeds all seemed to have dropped from some very superior social sphere. The stranger, who was tired no doubt, remained invisible; perhaps he spent part of his time in settling in the rooms he selected, announcing his intention of remaining some little time. He insisted on seeing where his horses were housed in the stable, and was exceedingly particular; they were to be kept apart from those belonging to the inn, and from any that might arrive. So much eccentric care led the host of the *Mulet* to the conclusion that the visitor must be an Englishman.

On the very first evening some attempts were made on the *Mulet* by curious inquirers; but no information was to be got out of the little groom, who refused to give any account of his master, not by misleading answers or silence, but by such banter as seemed to indicate deep depravity far beyond his years.

After a careful toilet, the visitor ate his dinner at about six o'clock, and then rode out, his groom in attendance, on the Brienne road, and returned very late. The innkeeper, his wife, and the chambermaids vainly examined the stranger's luggage and possessions; they discovered nothing that could throw any light on the mysterious visitor's rank, name, profession, or purpose.

The effect was incalculable; endless surmises were put forward, such as might have justified the intervention of the public prosecutor.

When he returned, the stranger admitted the mistress of

the house, who laid before him the volume in which, by the regulations of the police, he was required to write his name and dignity, the object of his visit, and the place whence he came.

"I shall write nothing whatever, madame," said he to the innkeeper's wife. "If anybody troubles you on the subject, you can say that I refused, and send the Sous-préfet to me if you like, for I have no passport.—People will ask you a great many questions about me, madame," he added. "And you can answer what you please; I do not intend that you should know anything about me, even if you should obtain information in spite of me. If you annoy me, I shall go the *Hôtel de la Poste,* on the square by the bridge; and, observe, that I propose to remain a fortnight at least. I should be very sorry to go, for I know you to be a sister of Gothard, one of the heroes of the Simeuse case."

"Certainly, sir!" replied the sister of Gothard—the Cinq-Cygnes' steward.

After this, the stranger had no difficulty in detaining the good woman for nearly two hours, and extracting from her all she could tell him concerning Arcis—everybody's fortune, everybody's business, and who all the officials were.

Next morning he again rode out attended by the tiger, and did not come in till midnight.

The reader can now understand Cécile's little jest, which Madame Beauvisage thought had nothing in it.

Beauvisage and Cécile, equally surprised by the order of the day set forth by Séverine, were no less delighted. While his wife was changing her dress to go to Madame Marion's, the father listened to the girl's hypotheses—guesses such as a young lady naturally indulges in under such circumstances. Then, tired by the day's work, as soon as his wife and daughter were gone, he went to bed.

As all may suppose who know France, or the province of Champagne—which is not quite the same thing—or yet more, the ways of country towns, there was a perfect mob in Madame Marion's rooms that evening. Simon Giguet's success

was regarded as a victory over the Comte de Gondreville, and the independence of Arcis in electioneering matters as established for ever. The news of poor Charles Keller's death was felt to be a special dispensation from Heaven, and silenced rivalry.

Antonin Goulard, Frédéric Marest, Olivier Vinet, Monsieur Martener, in short, all the authorities who had ever frequented the house, whose opinions could hardly be adverse to the Government as established by popular suffrage in July 1830, were there as usual, but all brought thither by curiosity as to the attitude assumed by the Beauvisages, mother and daughter.

The drawing-room, restored to order, bore no traces of the meeting which had presumably decided Maître Simon's fate.

By eight o'clock, four card-players, at each of the four tables, were busily occupied. The small drawing-room and the dining-room were full of company. Never, excepting on great occasions when there was dancing, or on some public holiday, had Madame Marion seen people crowded at the door of her room, and streaming in like the tail of a comet.

"It is the dawn of advancement," said Olivier, remarking to her on a sight so delightful to a woman who is fond of entertaining.

"It is impossible to foresee what Simon may rise to," replied Madame Marion. "We live in an age when a man who has perseverance and the art of getting on may aspire to the best."

This speech was made less to Vinet than for the benefit of Madame Beauvisage, who had just come in with her daughter and congratulated her friend.

To avoid any direct questioning, and to forefend any misinterpretation of chance remarks, Cécile's mother took a seat at a whist-table, and threw all her concentrated energies into the task of winning a hundred points. A hundred points means fifty sous! If a player loses so large a sum, it is a two days' wonder at Arcis.

Cécile went to gossip with Mademoiselle Mollot, one of her bosom friends, and seemed more affectionate to her than ever. Mademoiselle Mollot was the beauty of Arcis, as Cécile was the heiress. M. Mollot, clerk of assize at Arcis, lived in the Grande Place, in a house situated very much as that of the Beauvisages' was at the bridge end. Madame Mollot, who never sat anywhere but at the drawing-room window on the ground floor, suffered in consequence from acute and chronic curiosity, a permanent and inveterate malady. Madame Mollot devoted herself to watching her neighbors, as a nervous woman talks of her ailments, with airs, and graces, and thorough enjoyment. If a countryman came on the Square from the road to Brienne, she watched and wondered what his business could be at Arcis, and her mind knew no rest till she could account for that peasant's proceedings. She spent her whole life in criticising events, men and things, and the household affairs of Arcis.

She was a tall, meagre woman, the daughter of a judge at Troyes, and she had brought Monsieur Mollot, formerly Grévin's managing clerk, fortune enough to enable him to pay for his place as clerk of assize. The clerk of assize ranks with a judge, just as in the Supreme Court the chief clerk ranks with a councillor. Monsieur Mollot owed his nomination to the Comte de Gondreville, who had settled the matter by a word in season at the Chancellor's office in favor of Grévin's clerk. The whole ambition of these three persons—Mollot, his wife, and his daughter—was to see Ernestine Mollot, who was an only child, married to Antonin Goulard. Thus the rejection by the Beauvisages of every advance on the part of the Sous-préfet had tightened the bonds of friendship between the two families.

"There is a much-provoked man!" said Ernestine to Cécile, pointing to Simon Giguet. "He is pining to come and talk to us; but everybody who comes in feels bound to congratulate and detain him. Fifty times at least I have heard him say—'The goodwill of my fellow-citizens is towards my father, I believe, rather than myself; be that as it may, rely upon it,

I shall devote myself not merely to our common interests, but more especially to yours'—I can hear the words from the movement of his lips, and every time he looks round at you with the eyes of a martyr."

"Ernestine," said Cécile, "stay by me all the evening, for I do not want to hear his hints hidden under speeches full of *Alas!* and punctuated with sighs."

"Then you do not want to be the wife of a Keeper of the Seals!"

"Have they got no higher than that?" said Cécile, laughing.

"I assure you," said Ernestine, "that just now, before you came in, Monsieur Godivet the registrar declared in his enthusiasm that Simon would be Keeper of the Seals before three years were out."

"And do they rely on the patronage of the Comte de Gondreville?" asked Goulard, seating himself by the two girls, with a shrewd suspicion that they were laughing at his friend Giguet.

"Ah, Monsieur Antonin," said pretty Ernestine, "you promised my mother to find out who the handsome stranger is! What is your latest information?"

"The events of to-day, mademoiselle, have been of far greater importance," said Antonin, seating himself by Cécile like a diplomate enchanted to escape from general observation by taking refuge with a party of girls. "My whole career as Sous-préfet or full Préfet hangs in the balance."

"Why! Will you not allow your friend Simon to be returned as unanimously elected?"

"Simon is my friend, but the Government is my master, and I mean to do all I can to hinder Simon's return.—And Madame Mollot ought to lend me her assistance as the wife of a man whose duties attach him to the Government."

"We are quite prepared to side with you," said Madame Mollot. "My husband told me," she went on in an undertone, "of all the proceedings here this morning. It was lamentable! Only one man showed any talent—Achille Pigoult.

Every one agrees in saying that he is an orator, and would shine in Parliament. And though he has nothing, and my daughter is an only child with a marriage portion of sixty thousand francs—to say nothing of what we may leave her—and money from her father's uncle the miller, and from my aunt Lambert at Troyes—well, I declare to you that if Monsieur Achille Pigoult should do us the honor of proposing for her, for my part, I would say yes—that is, if my daughter liked him well enough. But the little simpleton will not marry any one she does not fancy.—It is Mademoiselle Beauvisage who has put that into her head."

The Sous-préfet took this broadside as a man who knows that he has thirty thousand francs a year of his own, and expects to be made Préfet.

"Mademoiselle Beauvisage is in the right," said he, looking at Cécile; "she is rich enough to marry for love."

"We will not discuss marriage," said Ernestine. "It only distresses my poor little Cécile, who was confessing to me just now that if she could only be married for love, and not for her money, she would like to be courted by some stranger who knew nothing of Arcis or the fortunes which are to make her a female Crœsus; and she only wishes she could go through some romantic adventure that would end in her being loved and married for her own sake——"

"That is a very pretty idea. I always knew that mademoiselle had as much wit as money!" exclaimed Olivier Vinet, joining the group, in detestation of the flatterers surrounding Simon Giguet, the idol of the day.

"And that was how, from one thing to another, we were led to talk of the Unknown——"

"And then," added Ernestine, "she thought of him as the possible hero of the romance I have sketched——"

"Oh!" cried Madame Mollot, "a man of fifty! Never!"

"How do you know that he is a man of fifty?" asked Vinet, with a smile.

"To tell the truth," said Madame Mollot, "I was so mystified, that this morning I took my opera-glass——"

"Well done!" exclaimed the inspector of works, who was courting the mother to win the daughter.

"And so," Madame Mollot went on, "I could see the stranger shaving himself—with such elegant razors! Gold handles—or silver-gilt."

"Gold! gold!" cried Vinet. "When there is any doubt, let everything be of the best!—And I, who have never seen the gentleman, feel quite sure that he is at least a Count." This, which was thought very funny, made everybody laugh.*

The little group who could be so merry excited the envy of the dowagers and attracted the attention of the black-coated men who stood round Simon Giguet. As to Giguet himself, he was in despair at not being able forthwith to lay his fortune and his prospects at the heiress' feet.

"Oh, my dear father," thought the deputy clerk, finding himself complimented for the involuntary witticism, "what a place you have sent me to as a beginning of my experience!—A count—*Comte* with an *m*, ladies," he explained. "A man as illustrious by birth as he is distinguished in manners; noteworthy for his fortune and his carriages—a dandy, a man of fashion—a lemon-kid glove man——"

"He has the smartest tilbury you ever saw, Monsieur Olivier," said Ernestine.

"And you never told me of his tilbury, Antonin, this morning when we were discussing this dark conspirator; the tilbury is really an attenuating circumstance. A man with a tilbury cannot be a Republican."

"Young ladies," said Antonin Goulard, "there is nothing I would not do to promote your pleasure.—We will know, and that soon, if he is a *Comte,* with an *m,* so that you may be able to construct your *conte* with an *n.*"

"And it may then become history," said the engineer.

"As written for the edification of Sous-préfets," said Olivier Vinet.

"And how will you set about it?" asked Madame Mollot.

* There is a pun in the French on the words *Comte*, a Count, and *Conte*, a romance, a fib.

"Ah!" replied the Sous-préfet. "If you were to ask Mademoiselle Beauvisage whom she would marry, if she were condemned to choose from the men who are here now, she would not tell you! You must grant some reticence to power.—Be quite easy, young ladies, in ten minutes you shall know whether the stranger is a count or a bagman."

Antonin left the little coterie of girls—for there were besides Cécile and Ernestine, Mademoiselle Berton, the daughter of the collector of revenue, an insignificant damsel who was a sort of satellite to the heiress and the beauty, and Mademoiselle Herbelot, sister of the second notary of Arcis, an old maid of thirty, sour, pinched, and dressed after the manner of old maids—she wore a green tabinet gown, and a kerchief with embroidered corners, crossed and knotted in front after the manner in fashion during the Reign of Terror.

"Julien," said the Sous-préfet to his servant in the vestibule, "you were in service for six months with the Gondrevilles; do you know a count's coronet when you see it?"

"It has nine points, sir, with balls."

"Very good. Then go over to the *Mulet* and try to get a look at the tilbury belonging to the strange gentleman who is staying there; and come back and tell me what is painted on it. Do the job cleverly, pick up anything you can hear.—If you see the little groom, ask him at what hour to-morrow his master can receive the Sous-préfet—say Monsieur le Comte, if by chance you see such a coronet. Don't drink, say nothing, come back quickly, and when you return let me know by just showing yourself at the drawing-room door."

"Yes, Monsieur le Sous-préfet."

The *Mulet* inn, as has been said, stands on the Place at the opposite corner to the garden wall of Madame Marion's house on the other side of the Brienne road. So the problem would be quickly solved.

Antonin Goulard returned to his seat by Mademoiselle Beauvisage.

"We talked of him so much here last evening," Madame Mollot was saying, "that I dreamed of him all night——"

"Dear, dear!" said Vinet; "do you still dream of the Unknown, fair lady?"

"You are very impertinent. I could make you dream of me if I chose!" she retorted. "So this morning when I got up——"

It may here be noted that Madame Mollet was regarded at Arcis as having a smart wit—that is to say, she talked fluently, and took an unfair advantage of the gift. A Parisian wandering in those parts, like the Stranger in question, would have probably thought her an intolerable chatterbox.

—"And was dressing, in the natural course of things, as I looked straight before me——"

"Out of window?" said Goulard.

"Certainly.—My dressing-room looks out on the market-place.—You must know that Poupart has given the Stranger one of the rooms that face mine——"

"One room, mamma!" exclaimed Ernestine. "The Count has three rooms! The groom, who is all in black, is in the first room; the second has been turned into a sort of drawing-room; and the gentleman sleeps in the third."

"Then he has half the inn," remarked Mademoiselle Herbelot.

"Well, what has that to do with the man himself?" said Madame Mollot, vexed at being interrupted by girls; "I am speaking of his person."

"Do not interrupt the orator," said Olivier Vinet.

"As I was stooping——"

"Sitting," said Antonin Goulard.

"Madame was as she ought to be—dressing, and looking at the *Mulet*," said Vinet.

These pleasantries are highly esteemed in the country; for everybody has said everything there for too long not to be content with the same nonsense as amused our fathers before the importation of English prudery, one of the forms of merchandise which custom-houses cannot prohibit.

"Do not interrupt the orator," said Mademoiselle Beauvisage to Vinet, with a responsive smile.

—"My eyes involuntarily fell on the window of the room in which last night the Stranger had gone to bed—at what hour I cannot imagine, for I lay awake till after midnight!—It is my misfortune to have a husband who snores till the walls and ceiling tremble. If I get to sleep first, I sleep so heavily that I hear nothing; but if Mollot gets the start, my night's rest is done for."

"There is a third alternative—you might go off together," said Achille Pigoult, coming to join this cheerful party. "It is your slumbers that are in question, I perceive——"

"Hold your tongue, and get along with you," said Madame Mollot, very graciously.

"You see what that means?" said Cécile in Ernestine's ear.

"Well, he had not come in by one o'clock," Madame Mollot went on.

"He is a fraud! Sneaking in when you could not see him," said Achille Pigoult. "Oh, he is a knowing one, you may depend! He will get us all into a bag and sell us on the market-place!"

"To whom?" asked Vinet.

"To a business, to an idea, to a system!" replied the notary, and the other lawyer answered with a cunning smile.

"Imagine my surprise," Madame Mollot returned, "when I caught sight of a piece of stuff, so magnificent, so elegant, so gaudy!—Said I to myself, 'He must have a dressing-gown of that stuff woven with spun glass which we saw at the Industrial Exhibition.'—And I went for my opera-glass and looked.—But, good Heavens! what did I see? Above the dressing-gown, where his head should have been, I saw a huge mass, like a big knee.—No, I cannot tell you how curious I was!"

"I can quite imagine it," said Antonin.

"No, you cannot imagine it," said Madame Mollot, "for that knee——"

"Oh, I see it all," said Olivier Vinet, shouting with

laughter. "The Stranger was dressing too, and you saw his two knees——"

"Not at all," said Madame Mollot; "you are putting things into my mouth.—The Stranger was standing up; he held a sponge over a huge basin, and your rude joke be on your own head, Monsieur Olivier. I should have known if I had seen what you suppose——"

"Oh! have known—— Madame, you are committing yourself!" said Antonin Goulard.

"Do let me speak!" said Madame Mollot. "It was his head! He was washing his head! he has not a hair."

"Rash man!" said Antonin Goulard. "He certainly cannot have come to look for a wife. To get married here a man must have some hair. Hair is in great request."

"So I have my reasons for saying that he must be fifty. A man does not take to a wig before that age. For, in fact, the Unknown, when he had finished his toilet, opened his window, and I beheld him from afar, the owner of a splendid head of black hair. He stuck up his eyeglass when I went to the balcony.—So, my dear Cécile, that gentleman will hardly be the hero of your romance."

"Why not? Men of fifty are not to be disdained when they are Counts," said Ernestine.

"Perhaps he had fair hair after all," said Olivier Vinet mischievously, "and then he would be very eligible. The real question is whether it was his bald head that Madame Mollot saw, or——"

"Be quiet!" said Madame Mollot.

Antonin Goulard went out to send Madame Marion's servant across to the *Mulet* with instructions for Julien.

"Bless me, what does a husband's age matter?" said Mademoiselle Herbelot.

"So long as you get one," Vinet put in. He was much feared for his cold and malignant sarcasm.

"Yes," replied the old maid, piqued by the remark, "I would rather have a husband of fifty, kind and indulgent to his wife, than a young man of between twenty and thirty who

had no heart, and whose wit stung everybody—even his wife."

"That," said Olivier Vinet, "is mere talk, since to prefer a man of fifty to a young man one must have the choice!"

"Oh!" said Madame Mollot, to stop this squabble between Mademoiselle Herbelot and young Vinet, who always went too far, "when a woman has seen something of life, she knows that whether a husband is fifty or five-and-twenty, it comes to exactly the same thing if he is merely esteemed.—The really important thing in marriage is the suitability of circumstances to be considered.—If Mademoiselle Beauvisage wishes to live in Paris—and that would be my notion in her place—I would certainly not marry anybody in Arcis. If I had had such a fortune as she will have, I might very well have given my hand to a Count, a man who could have placed me in a good social position, and I should not have asked to see his pedigree."

"It would have been enough for you to have seen him at his toilet," said Vinet in a murmur to Madame Mollot.

"But the King can make a Count, madame," observed Madame Marion, who had been standing for a minute or two looking at the circle of young people.

"But some young ladies like their Counts ready-made," said Vinet.

"Now, Monsieur Antonin," said Cécile, laughing at Olivier Vinet's speech, "the ten minutes are over, and we do not yet know whether the Stranger is a Count."

"The Government must prove itself infallible," said Vinet, turning to Antonin.

"I will keep my word," replied the Sous-préfet, seeing his servant's face in the doorway. And he again left his seat.

"You are talking of the Stranger!" said Madame Marion. "Does any one know anything about him?"

"No, madame," said Achille Pigoult. "But he, without knowing it, is like an athlete in a circus—the object of interest to two thousand pairs of eyes.—I do know something," added the little notary.

"Oh, tell us, Monsieur Achille!" Ernestine eagerly exclaimed.

"His servant's name is Paradis."

"Paradis!" echoed everybody.

"Can any one be called Paradis?" asked Madame Herbelot, taking a seat by her sister-in-law.

"It goes far to prove that his master is an angel," the notary went on, "for when his servant follows him you see——"

"'*C'est le chemin du Paradis.*' That is really very neat," said Madame Marion, who was anxious to secure Achille Pigoult in her nephew's interest.

"Monsieur," Julien was saying to his master in the dining-room, "there is a coat-of-arms on the tilbury."

"A coat-of-arms?"

"And very queer they are. There is a coronet over them—nine points with balls——"

"Then he is a Count——"

"And a winged monster running like mad, just like a postilion that has lost something.—And this is what is written on the ribbon," said he, taking a scrap of paper out of his waistcoat pocket. "Mademoiselle Anicette, the Princesse de Cadignan's maid who had just come—in a carriage, of course—to bring a letter to the gentleman (and the carriage from Cinq-Cygne is waiting at the door) copied the words down for me."

"Give it me."

The Sous-préfet read:

"*Quo me trahit fortuna.*"

Though he was not a sufficiently accomplished herald to know what family bore this motto, Antonin supposed that the Cinq-Cygnes would hardly lend their chaise for the Princesse de Cadignan to send an express messenger to any one not of the highest nobility.

"Oho! so you know the Princess' maid? You are a lucky beggar," said Antonin to the man.

Julien, a native of the place, after being in service at Gondreville for six months, had been engaged by Monsieur le Sous-préfet, who wished to have a stylish servant.

"Well, monsieur, Anicette was my father's god-daughter.

And father, who felt kindly to the poor child, as her father was dead, sent her to Paris to learn dressmaking; my mother could not bear the sight of her."

"Is she pretty?"

"Not amiss, Monsieur le Sous-préfet. More by token she had her little troubles in Paris. However, as she is clever, and can make dresses and understands hairdressing, the Princess took her on the recommendation of Monsieur Marin, head-valet to Monsieur le Duc de Maufrigneuse."

"And what did she say about Cinq-Cygne? Is there a great deal of company?"

"Yes, sir, a great deal. The Princess is there, and Monsieur d'Arthez, the Duc de Maufrigneuse and the Duchess, and the young Marquis. In short, the house is full. Monseigneur the Bishop of Troyes is expected this evening."

"Monseigneur Troubert. Oh, I should like to know whether he makes any stay there."

"Anicette thought he would. She fancies he has come on account of the gentleman who is lodging at the *Mulet*. And more people are expected. The coachman said there was a great talk about the elections. Monsieur le Président Michu is to spend a few days there."

"Just try to get that maid into the town on some pretext. Have you any fancy for her?"

"If she had anything of her own, there is no knowing. She is a smart girl."

"Well, tell her to come to see you at the Sous-préfecture."

"Very well, sir; I will go at once."

"But do not mention me, or she will not come. Tell her you have heard of a good place——"

"Oh, sir! I was in service at Gondreville——"

"And you do not know the history of that message sent from Cinq-Cygne at such an hour. For it is half-past nine."

"It was something pressing, it would seem; for the Count, who had just come in from Gondreville——"

"The Stranger had been to Gondreville!"

"He dined there, Monsieur le Sous-préfet. And, you shall

see, it is the greatest joke. The little groom is as drunk as an owl, saving your presence. They gave him so much champagne wine in the servants' hall that he cannot keep on his legs. They did it for a joke, no doubt."

"Well—but the Count?"

"The Count had gone to bed, but as soon as he read the note he got up. He is now dressing. They were putting the horse in, and he is going out in the tilbury to spend the rest of the evening at Cinq-Cygne."

"Then he is a person of importance?"

"Oh yes, sir, no doubt; for Gothard, the steward at Cinq-Cygne, came this morning to see Poupart, who is his brother-in-law, and told him to be sure to hold his tongue about the gentleman and his doings, and to serve him as if he were the King."

"Then can Vinet be right?" thought Goulard to himself. "Is there some plot brewing?"

"It was the Duc Georges de Maufrigneuse who sent Monsieur Gothard to the *Mulet;* and when Poupart came here to the meeting this morning, it was because this Count made him come. If he were to tell Monsieur Poupart to set out for Paris to-night, he would go. Gothard told his brother-in-law to throw everything over for the gentleman and hoodwink all inquirers."

"If you can get hold of Anicette, be sure to let me know," said Antonin.

"Well, I could go to see her at Cinq-Cygne, sir, if you were to send me out to your house at le Val-Preux."

"That is a good idea. You might get a lift on the chaise. But what about the little groom?"

"He is a smart little chap, Monsieur le Sous-préfet! Just fancy, sir, screwed as he is, he has just ridden off on his master's fine English horse, a thoroughbred that can cover seven leagues an hour, to carry a letter to Troyes, that it may reach Paris to-morrow! And the brat is no more than nine and a half years old! What will he be by the time he is twenty?"

The Sous-préfet listened mechanically to this last piece of

domestic gossip. Julien chattered on for a few minutes, and Goulard heard him vaguely, thinking all the time of the great Unknown.

"Wait a little," he said to the servant.

"What a puzzle!" thought he, as he slowly returned to the drawing-room. "A man who dines with the Comte de Gondreville, and who spends the night at Cinq-Cygne! Mysteries with a vengeance!"

"Well!" cried Mademoiselle Beauvisage's little circle as he joined them.

"Well, he is a count, and of the right sort, I will answer for it!"

"Oh, how I should like to see him!" exclaimed Cécile.

"Mademoiselle," said Antonin, with a mischievous smile at Madame Mollot, "he is tall and well made, and does not wear a wig! His little tiger was as tipsy as a lord; they had filled him up with wine in the servants' hall at Gondreville; and the child, who is but nine, replied to Julien with all the dignity of an old valet when my man said something about his master's wig. 'A wig! My master! I would not stay with him. He dyes his hair, and that is bad enough.' "

"Your opera-glasses magnify a good deal," said Achille Pigoult to Madame Mollot, who laughed.

"Well, and this boy of our handsome Count's, tipsy as he is, has flown off to Troyes to carry a letter, and will be there in an hour and a quarter, in spite of the darkness."

"I should like to see the tiger!" said Vinet.

"If he dined at Gondreville, we shall soon know all about this Count," said Cécile, "for grandpapa is going there to-morrow morning."

"What will seem even more strange," said Antonin Goulard, "is that a special messenger, in the person of Mademoiselle Anicette, the Princesse de Cadignan's maid, has come from Cinq-Cygne to the stranger, and he is going to spend the night there."

"Bless me!" said Olivier Vinet; "but he is not a man—he is a demon, a phœnix! He is the friend of both parties! He can ingurgitate——"

"For shame, monsieur!" said Madame Mollot, "you use words——"

"Ingurgitate is good Latin, madame," replied Vinet very gravely. "He ingurgitates, I say, with King Louis-Philippe in the morning, and banquets at Holyrood in the evening with Charles X. There is but one reason that can allow a respectable Christian to frequent both camps and go alike to the Capulets' and the Montagues'. Ah! I know what the man is! He is the manager of the railway line between Paris and Lyons, or Paris and Dijon, or Montereau and Troyes——"

"Of course!" cried Antonin. "You have hit it. Only finance, interest, or speculation are equally welcome wherever they go."

"Yes, and just now the greatest names, the greatest families, the old and the new nobility are rushing full tilt into joint-stock concerns," said Achille Pigoult.

"Francs to the Frank!" said Olivier, without a smile.

"You can hardly be said to be the olive branch of peace," said Madame Mollot.

"But is it not disgusting to see such names as Verneuil, Maufrigneuse, and d'Hérouville cheek by jowl with Tillet and Nucingen in the quotations on 'Change?"

"Our stranger is, you may depend, an infant railway line," said Vinet.

"Well, all Arcis will be topsy-turvy by to-morrow," said Achille Pigoult. "I will call on the gentleman to get the notary's work in the concern. There will be two thousand deeds to draw up!"

"And so our romance is a locomotive!" said Ernestine sadly to Cécile.

"Nay, a count and a railway company in one is doubly conjugal," said Achille. "But—is he a bachelor?"

"I will find out to-morrow from grandpapa!" cried Cécile with affected enthusiasm.

"A pretty joke!" exclaimed Madame Marion with a forced laugh. "Why, Cécile, child, is your brain running on the Unknown?"

"A husband is always the Unknown," remarked Olivier Vinet hastily, with a glance at Mademoiselle Beauvisage, which she perfectly understood.

"And why not?" said she. "There is nothing compromising in that. Besides, if these gentlemen are right, he is either a great lord or a great speculator. My word! I can do with either. I like Paris! I want a carriage, and a fine house, and a box at the Opera, et cetera."

"To be sure," said Vinet. "Why refuse yourself anything in a day-dream? Now, if I had the honor to be your brother, you should marry the young Marquis de Cinq-Cygne, who is, it strikes me, the young fellow to make the money fly, and to laugh at his mother's objections to the actors in the judicial drama in which our presiding judge's father came to such a sad end."

"You would find it easier to become Prime Minister!" said Madame Marion. "There can never be an alliance between Grévin's granddaughter and the Cinq-Cygnes."

"Romeo was within an ace of marrying Juliet," said Achille Pigoult; "and Mademoiselle Cécile is handsomer——"

"Oh, if you quote opera!" said Herbelot feebly, as he rose from the whist-table.

"My colleague," said Achille Pigoult, "is evidently not strong in mediæval history."

"Come along, Malvina," said the sturdy notary, without answering his young brother of the law.

"Tell me, Monsieur Antonin," said Cécile, "you spoke of Anicette, the Princesse de Cadignan's maid—do you know her?"

"No; but Julien does. She is his father's godchild, and they are old friends."

"Oh, do try, through Julien, to get her for us; mamma will give any wages——"

"Mademoiselle, to hear is to obey, as they say to the despots in Asia," replied the Sous-préfet. "To serve you, see how prompt I will be."

He went off to desire Julien to get a lift in the chaise

returning to Cinq-Cygne, and to win over Anicette at any cost.

At this moment Simon Giguet, who had been put through his paces by all the influential men of Arcis, and who believed himself secure of his election, joined the circle round Cécile and Mademoiselle Mollot.

It was getting late; ten had struck.

Having consumed an enormous quantity of cakes, of orgeat, punch, lemonade, and various fruit syrups, all who had come that evening to Madame Marion's on purely political grounds, and who were unaccustomed to tread these boards—to them quite aristocratic—disappeared promptly, all the more so because they never sat up so late. The party would now be more intimate in its tone; Simon Giguet hoped to be able to exchange a few words with Cécile, and looked at her with a conquering air. This greatly offended Cécile.

"My dear fellow," said Antonin to Simon, as he saw the aureole of triumph on his friend's brow, "you have joined us at a moment when all the men of Arcis are in the wrong box——"

"Quite wrong," said Ernestine, nudged by Cécile. "We are quite crazy about the Unknown. Cécile and I are quarreling for him."

"To begin with, he is no longer unknown," said Cécile. "He is a Count."

"Some adventurer!" said Simon Giguet scornfully.

"Would you say that to his face," retorted Cécile, much nettled. "A man who has just had a message by one of the Princesse de Cadignan's servants, who dined to-day at Gondreville, and is gone to spend this very evening with the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne?"

She spoke so eagerly and sharply that Simon was put out of countenance.

"Indeed, mademoiselle," said Olivier Vinet, "if we all said to people's faces what we say behind each other's backs, society would be impossible. The pleasure of society, especially in the country, consists in speaking ill of others."

"Monsieur Simon is jealous of your enthusiasm about the strange Count," remarked Ernestine.

"It seems to me," said Cécile, "that Monsieur Simon has no right to be jealous of any fancy of mine!"

And saying this in a tone to annihilate Simon, Cécile rose. Everybody made way for her, and she joined her mother, who was settling her gambling account.

"My dear girl," said Madame Marion, close at her heels, "it seems to me that you are very hard on my poor Simon."

"Why, what has the dear little puss been doing?" asked her mother.

"Mamma, Monsieur Simon gave my Unknown a slap in the face by calling him an adventurer."

Simon had followed his aunt, and was now on the battle-field by the whist-table. Thus the four persons, whose interests were so serious, were collected in the middle of the room; Cécile and her mother on one side of the table, Madame Marion and her nephew on the other.

"Really, madame," said Simon Giguet, "you must confess that a young lady must be very anxious to find me in the wrong, to be vexed by my saying that a man of whom all Arcis is talking, and who is living at the *Mulet*——"

"Do you suppose he is competing with you?" said Madame Beauvisage jestingly.

"I should certainly feel it a deep grievance if he should be the cause of any misunderstanding between Mademoiselle Cécile and me," said the candidate, with a beseeching look at the girl.

"But you pronounced sentence, monsieur, in a cutting tone, which proved you to be despotic—and you are right; if you hope ever to be Minister, you must cut a good deal!"

Madame Beauvisage took Madame Marion by the arm and led her to a sofa. Cécile, left alone, went to join the circle, that she might not hear any reply that Simon might make; and he remained by the table, looking foolish enough, mechanically playing tricks with the bone fish.

"There are as good fish in the sea!" said Olivier Vinet,

who had observed the little scene; and Cécile, overhearing the remark, though it was spoken in a low tone, could not help laughing.

"My dear friend," said Madame Marion to Madame Beauvisage, "nothing now, you see, can hinder my nephew's election."

"I congratulate you—and the Chamber," said Séverine.

"And my nephew will make his mark, my dear.—I will tell you why: his own fortune, and what his father will leave him with mine, will bring him in about thirty thousand francs a year. When a man is a member of parliament and has such a fortune, there is nothing he may not aspire to."

"Madame, he will command our admiration, and our best wishes will be with him throughout his political career, but——"

"I ask for no reply," exclaimed Madame Marion, eagerly interrupting her friend "I only ask you to think it over. Do our young people like each other? Can we arrange the match? We shall live in Paris whenever the Chambers are sitting, and who knows but the Member for Arcis may be settled there by getting some good place in office?—See how Monsieur Vinet of Provins has got on! Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf was thought very foolish to marry him; and before long she will be the wife of the Keeper of the Seals, and Monsieur Vinet may have a peerage if he likes."

"Madame, it does not rest with me to settle my daughter's marriage. In the first place, her father and I leave her absolutely free to choose for herself. If she wanted to marry the *Unknown,* if he were a suitable match, we should give our consent. Then Cécile depends entirely on her grandfather, who, as a wedding gift, will settle on her a house in Paris, the Hôtel Beauséant, which he bought for us ten years ago, and which at the present day is worth eight hundred thousand francs. It is one of the finest mansions in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. He has also a sum of two hundred thousand francs put by for furnishing it. Now a grandfather who behaves in that way, and who will persuade my mother-in-law

on her part to do something for her grandchild, has some right to an opinion on the question of a suitable match——"

"Certainly!" said Madame Marion, amazed at this revelation, which would add to the difficulties of her nephew's marriage with Cécile.

"And even if Cécile had no expectations from her grandfather," Madame Beauvisage went on, "she would not marry without consulting him. The young man my father had chosen is just dead; I do not know what his present intentions may be. If you have any proposals to make, go and see my father."

"Very well, I will," said Madame Marion.

Madame Beauvisage signaled to Cécile, and they left.

On the following afternoon Antonin and Frédéric Marest were walking, as was their after-dinner custom, with Monsieur Martener and Olivier under the limes of the Avenue des Soupirs, smoking their cigars. These walks are one of the little pleasures of provincial bigwigs, when they live on good terms with each other.

They had taken but a few turns when they were joined by Simon Giguet, who said to the Sous-préfet with an air of mystery:

"You will surely stick by an old comrade, who will make it his business to get you the Legion of Honor and a *préfecture!*"

"Are you beginning your political career already?" said Antonin, laughing. "So you are trying to bribe me—you who are such a puritan?"

"Will you support me?"

"My dear fellow, you know that Bar-sur-Aube registers its votes here. Who can guarantee a majority under such circumstances? My colleague at Bar-sur-Aube would show me up if I did not do as much as he to support the Government; and your promises are conditional, while my overthrow would be a certainty."

"But I have no opponent."

"So you think," said Antonin. "But one will turn up, there is no doubt of that."

"And my aunt, who knows that I am on tenter-hooks, has not come back!" cried Giguet. "These three hours may count for three years!"

And the great secret came out. He confided to his friend that Madame Marion was gone to propose on his behalf to old Grévin for Cécile.

The friends had walked on as far as the Brienne road, just opposite the *Mulet*. While Simon stared down the hill, up which his aunt would return from the bridge, the Sous-préfet was studying the runlets worn in the ground by the rain. Arcis is not paved with either flagstones or cobbles, for the plains of Champagne afford no building materials, much less any pebbles large enough to make a road. There are paved side-paths in one or two streets, but the rest are badly macadamized, and that is enough to explain the state they are in when it rains. The Sous-préfet kept himself in countenance by seeming to meditate on this important matter, but he did not lose one of the secret pangs that found expression in his companion's anxious face.

At this particular moment the Stranger was returning from the château of Cinq-Cygne, where he had evidently spent the night. Goulard was determined to clear up for himself the mystery in which the Stranger chose to wrap himself—being also wrapped, so far as his outer man was concerned, in a light overcoat or paletot of coarse frieze, such as was then the fashion. A cloak thrown over him hid his figure from view, and an enormous comforter of red cashmere covered his face up to the eyes. His hat, knowingly set on one side, was, nevertheless, not extravagant. Never was a mystery so mysteriously smothered and concealed.

"Clear the way!" cried the tiger, riding in front of the tilbury. "Open the gate, Daddy Poupart!" he piped in his shrill little voice.

The three stablemen ran out, and the tilbury went in without any one having seen the driver's face.

The Sous-préfet followed it, however, to the door of the inn.

"Madame Poupart," said Antonin, "will you tell Monsieur —Monsieur——?"

"I do not know his name," said Gothard's sister.

"Then you are to blame. The police regulations are definite, and Monsieur Groslier does not see a joke—like all police authorities when they have nothing to do."

"Innkeepers are never in the wrong at election time," said the tiger, getting off his horse.

"I will tell that to Vinet," thought the official. "Go and ask your master to see me, the Sous-préfet of Arcis."

Antonin went back to his three friends, who had stopped outside on seeing the Sous-préfet in conversation with the tiger, already famous in Arcis for his name and his ready wit.

"Monsieur begs that Monsieur le Sous-préfet will walk up. He will be delighted to see him," Paradis came out in a few minutes to say to Antonin.

"I say, little man," said Olivier, "how much a year does your master give a youth of your spirit and inches?"

"Give, monsieur?—What do you take me for? Monsieur le Comte allows himself to be done—and I am satisfied."

"That boy is at a good school," said Frédéric Marest.

"The High School, Monsieur le Procureur du Roi," replied Paradis, and the five men stared at his cool impudence.

"What a Figaro!" exclaimed Vinet.

"It does not do to sing small," said the boy. "My master calls me a little Robert Macaire. Since we have found out how to invest in the funds, we are Figaro—with the savings bank into the bargain."

"Why, what do you earn?"

"There are times when I make a thousand crowns on a race—and without selling my master, monsieur."

"Sublime infant! He knows the turf——"

"And all the gentleman riders!" said the boy, putting out his tongue at Vinet.

"Paradise road goes a long way!" said Frédéric Marest.

Antonin Goulard, meanwhile, shown up by the innkeeper, found the Unknown in the room he used for a drawing-room, and himself under inspection through a most impertinent eyeglass.

"Monsieur," said Antonin Goulard in a rather lofty tone, "I have just heard from the innkeeper's wife that you refuse to conform to the police regulations; and as I have no doubt that you are a man of some consequence, I have come myself——"

"Your name is Goulard?" said the Stranger in a head-voice.

"I am Sous-préfet, monsieur," said Antonin Goulard.

"Your father, I think, was attached to the Simeuses?"

"And I am attached to the Government. Times have changed."

"You have a servant named Julien who wants to bribe away the Princesse de Cadignan's waiting-maid?"

"Monsieur, I allow no one to speak to me in such a way; you misunderstand my character——"

"But you wish to understand mine," interrupted the other. "You may write it in the inn-register: 'An impertinent person, from Paris, age doubtful, traveling for his pleasure.'—It would be an innovation highly appreciated in France to imitate the English method of allowing people to come and go as they please without annoying them and asking them for their papers at every turn.—I have no passport: what will you do to me?"

"The public prosecutor is out there under the limes——" said the Sous-préfet.

"Monsieur Marest?—Wish him from me a very good morning."

"But who are you?"

"Whatever you wish me to be, my dear Monsieur Goulard," said the Stranger, "since it is you who must decide how I should appear before the good folks of this district. Give me some advice as to my demeanor. Here—read this."

And the visitor held out a note as follows:—

(*Private.*) PRÉFECTURE OF THE AUBE.

"MONSIEUR LE SOUS-PRÉFET,—Be good enough to take steps with the bearer as to the election in Arcis, and conform to his requirements in every particular. I request you to be absolutely secret, and to treat him with the respect due to his rank."

The note was written and signed by the Préfet of the department.

"You have been talking prose without knowing it," said the Stranger, as he took the letter back.

Antonin Goulard, already impressed by the man's gentlemanly appearance and manner, spoke respectfully.

"How is that, monsieur?" said he.

"By trying to bribe Anicette. She came to tell me of Julien's offers—you may call him Julien the Apostate, for little Paradis, my tiger, routed him completely, and he ended by confessing that you were anxious to place Anicette in the service of the richest family in Arcis. Now, as the richest family in Arcis are the Beauvisages, I presume that it is Mademoiselle Cécile who is anxious to secure such a treasure."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Very well, Anicette can go to the Beauvisages at once."

He whistled. Paradis appeared so promptly that his master said:

"You were listening."

"I cannot help myself, Monsieur le Comte, the walls are made of paper.—If you like, Monsieur le Comte, I can go to an upstairs room."

"No, you may listen; it is your privilege. It is my business to speak low when I do not want you to hear. Now, go back to Cinq-Cygne, and give this twenty-franc piece to Anicette from me.—Julien will be supposed to have bribed her on

your account," he added, turning to Goulard. "This gold piece means that she is to do as Julien tells her. Anicette may possibly be of use to our candidate."

"Anicette!"

"You see, Monsieur le Sous-préfet, I have made use of waiting-maids for two-and-thirty years. I had my first adventure at the age of thirteen, exactly like the Regent, the present King's great-great-grandfather.—Now, do you know the amount of this demoiselle Beauvisage's fortune?"

"No one can help knowing it, monsieur; for last evening at Madame Marion's, Madame Séverine said that Monsieur Grévin, Cécile's grandfather, would give her the Hôtel Beauséant and two hundred thousand francs on her wedding day."

The Stranger's eyes betrayed no surprise; he seemed to think it a very moderate fortune.

"Do you know Arcis well?" he asked Goulard.

"I am Sous-préfet of the town, and I was born here."

"Well, then, how can I balk curiosity?"

"By satisfying it, Monsieur le Comte. Use your Christian name; enter that and your title on the register."

"Very good: Comte Maxime."

"And if you would call yourself the manager of a railway company, Arcis would be content; you could keep it quiet for a fortnight by flying that flag."

"No, I prefer water-works; it is less common. I have come to improve the waste-lands of the province. That, my dear Monsieur Goulard, will be an excuse for inviting myself to dine at your house to meet the Beauvisages—to-morrow. I particularly wish to see them and study them."

"I shall be only too happy," said the official. "But I must ask your indulgence for the poverty of my establishment——"

"If I succeed in directing the election at Arcis in accordance with the wishes of those who have sent me here, you, my good friend, will be made a Préfet.—Read these——" and he held out two other letters.

"Very good, Monsieur le Comte," said Goulard, as he returned them.

"Make out a list of all the votes at the disposal of the Government. Above all, we must not appear to have any mutual understanding. I am merely a speculator, and do not care a fig about the election."

"I will send the police superintendent to compel you to write your name on Poupart's register."

"Yes, that is very good. Good-morning, monsieur.—What a land we live in!" he went on in a loud tone. "It is impossible to stir a step without having the whole posse at your heels—even the Sous-préfet!"

"You will have to settle that with the head of the police," replied Antonin emphatically.

And twenty minutes later there was a great talk at Madame Mollot's of high words between the Sous-préfet and the Stranger.

"Well, and what wood is the log made of that has dropped into our pool?" asked Olivier Vinet of Goulard, as he came away from the inn.

"A certain Comte Maxime, come to study the geology of the district in the hope of finding mineral sources," said Goulard indifferently.

"*Re*-sources you should say," replied Olivier.

"Does he fancy he can raise any capital in these parts?" asked Monsieur Martener.

"I doubt our royalist people seeing anything in that form of mining," said Vinet, smiling.

"What do you expect, judging from Madame Marion's looks and movements?" said Antonin, changing the conversation by pointing out Simon and his aunt in eager conference.

Simon had gone forward to meet Madame Marion, and stood talking in the square.

"Well, if he were accepted, a word would be enough to tell him so, I should think," observed Vinet.

"Well?" asked the two men at once as Simon came up the lime walk.

"My aunt has hopes. Madame Beauvisage and old Grévin, who was starting for Gondreville, were not surprised at our proposal; our respective fortunes were discussed. Cécile is absolutely free to make her own choice. Finally, Madame Beauvisage said that for her part she saw no objection to a connection which did her honor, though, at the same time, she must make her consent depend on my election, and possibly on my appearing in the Chamber; and old Grévin said he must consult the Comte de Gondreville, as he never came to any important decision without taking his advice."

"So you will not marry Cécile, old boy," said Goulard bluntly.

"And why not?" said Giguet ironically.

"My dear fellow, Madame Beauvisage and her daughter spend four evenings a week in your aunt's drawing-room; Madame Marion is the most thoroughly fine lady in Arcis. Though she is twenty years the elder, she is the object of Madame Beauvisage's envy; and do you suppose they could refuse you point-blank without some little civility?"

"Neither Yes nor No is No," Vinet went on, "in view of the extreme intimacy of your two families. If Madame Beauvisage is the woman of fortune, Madame Marion is the most looked up to; for, with the exception of the presiding judge's wife—who sees no one—she is the only woman who can entertain at all; she is the queen of Arcis. Madame Beauvisage wishes to refuse politely—that is all."

"It seems to me that old Grévin was making a fool of your aunt, my dear boy," said Frédéric Marest. "Yesterday you attacked the Comte de Gondreville; you hurt him, you offended him deeply—for Achille Pigoult defended him bravely—and now he is to be consulted as to your marrying Cécile!"

"No one can be craftier than old Grévin," said Vinet.

"Madame Beauvisage is ambitious," Goulard went on, "and knows that her daughter will have two millions of francs. She means to be the mother-in-law of a minister or of an ambassador, so as to lord it in Paris."

"Well, and why not that?" said Simon Giguet.

"I wish you may get it!" replied Goulard, looking at Vinet, and they laughed as they went on their way. "He will not even be elected!" he went on to Olivier. "The Government has schemes of its own. You will find a letter at home from your father, desiring you to secure every one in your connection who ought to vote for their masters. Your promotion depends upon it, and you are to keep your own counsel."

"And who is the man for whom they are to vote—ushers, attorneys, justice of the peace, and notaries?" asked Vinet.

"The man I will tell you to vote for."

"But how do you know that my father has written to me, and what he has written?"

"From the Unknown."

"The man of mines?"

"My dear Vinet, we are not to know him; we must treat him as a stranger.—He saw your father as he came through Provins. Just now this individual showed me a letter from the Préfet instructing me to act in the matter of the elections as I shall be directed by this Comte Maxime. I should not get off without having to fight a battle, that I knew! Let us dine together and plan our batteries: You want to be Public Prosecutor at Mantes, and I to be Préfet, and we must not appear to meddle in the elections, for we are between the hammer and anvil. Simon is the candidate put forward by the party who want to upset the present Ministry, and who may succeed. But for clear-sighted men like us there is but one thing to do."

"And that is?"

"To obey those who make and unmake ministries. The letter that was shown to me was from a man in the secrets of the immutable idea."

Before going any further, it will be necessary to explain who this "miner" was, and what he hoped to extract out of the province of Champagne.

About two months before Simon Giguet's day of triumph

as a candidate, at eleven o'clock one evening, just as tea was being served in the Marquise d'Espard's drawing-room in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, the Chevalier d'Espard, her brother-in-law, as he set his cup down on the chimney-shelf and looked at the circle round the fire, observed:

"Maxime was very much out of spirits this evening—did not you think so?"

"Well," replied Rastignac, "his depression is very natural. He is eight-and-forty; at that age a man does not make friends; and when we buried de Marsay, Maxime lost the only one who could thoroughly understand him, who could be of use to him, or make use of him."

"And he probably has some pressing debts. Could not you put him in the way of paying them off?" said the Marquise to Rastignac.

Rastignac at this juncture was in office for the second time; he had just been created Count, almost in spite of himself; his father-in-law, the Baron de Nucingen, had been made a peer of France; his brother was a bishop; the Comte de la Roche-Hugon, his brother-in-law, was ambassador; and he was supposed to be an indispensable element in the composition of any future ministry.

"You always forget, my dear Marquise," replied Rastignac, "that our Government changes its silver for nothing but gold; it takes no account of men."

"Is Maxime a man to blow his brains out?" asked du Tillet the banker.

"You only wish he were! Then we should be quits," replied Maxime de Trailles, who was supposed by all to have left the house.

And the Count rose like an apparition from the depths of a low chair behind that of the Chevalier d'Espard.

Everybody laughed.

"Will you have a cup of tea?" asked young Madame de Rastignac, whom the Marquise had begged to do the honors of the tea-table.

"With pleasure," said the Count, coming to stand in front of the fire.

This man, the prince of the rakes of Paris, had, till now, maintained the position of superiority assumed by dandies—in those days known in Paris as *gants jaunes* (*lemon-kids*), and since then as *lions*. It is needless to tell the story of his youth, full of disreputable adventures and terrible dramas, in which he had always managed to observe the proprieties. To this man women were but means to an end; he had no belief in their sufferings or their enjoyment; like the deceased de Marsay, he regarded them as naughty children.

After running through his own fortune, he had devoured that of a famous courtesan known as *La belle Hollandaise*, the mother of the no less famous Esther Gobseck. Then he brought trouble on Madame de Restaud, Madame Delphine de Nucingen's sister; the young Comtesse de Rastignac was Madame de Nucingen's daughter.

Paris society is full of inconceivable anomalies. The Baronne de Nucingen was at this moment in Madame d'Espard's drawing-room, face to face with the author of all her sister's misery—an assassin who had only murdered a woman's happiness. That, no doubt, was why he was there.

Madame de Nucingen had dined with the Marquise, and her daughter with her. Augusta de Nucingen had been married for about a year to the Comte de Rastignac, who had started on his political career by holding the post of Under-secretary of State in the Ministry formed by the famous de Marsay, the only great statesman brought to the front by the Revolution of July. Count Maxime de Trailles alone knew how much disaster he had occasioned; but he had always sheltered himself from blame by obeying the code of manly honor. Though he had squandered more money in his life than the felons in the four penal establishments of France had stolen in the same time, justice treated him with respect. He had never failed in any question of technical honor; he paid his gambling debts with scrupulous punctuality. He was a

capital player, and the partner of the greatest personages and ambassadors. He dined with all the members of the *Corps diplomatique.* He would fight; he had killed two or three men in his time—nay, he had murdered them, for his skill and coolness were matchless.

There was not a young man in Paris to compare with him in dress, in grace of manner, in pleasant wit, in ease and readiness, in what used to be called the *grand air.* As page to the Emperor, trained from the age of twelve in horse exercise of every kind, he was a noted rider. He had always five horses in his stables, he kept racers, he set the fashion. Finally, no man was more successful than he in giving a supper to younger men; he would drink with the stoutest, and come out fresh and cool, ready to begin again, as if orgies were his element.

Maxime, one of the men whom everybody despises, but who control that contempt by the insolence of audacity and the fear they inspire, never deceived himself as to his position. This was where his strength lay. Strong men can always criticise themselves.

At the time of the Restoration he had turned his employment as page to the Emperor to good account. He attributed his supposed Bonapartist proclivities to the repulses he had met with from a succession of ministers when he had wanted to serve under the Bourbons; for, in fact, notwithstanding his connections, his good birth, and his dangerous cleverness, he had never succeeded in getting an appointment. Then he had joined the underground conspiracy, which ended in the fall of the elder branch of the Bourbons. When the younger branch, at the heels of the Paris populace, had trampled down the senior branch, and established itself on the throne, Maxime made the most of his attachment to Napoleon, for whom he cared no more than for the object of his first flirtation. He then did good service, for which it was difficult to make a return, as he wanted to be repaid too often by people who knew how to keep accounts. At the first refusal Maxime assumed a hostile attitude, threatening to reveal

certain not very creditable details; for a dynasty first set up has, like infants, dirty linen to hide.

De Marsay, in the course of his career, made up for the blunders of those who had undervalued the usefulness of this person; he employed him on such secret errands as need a conscience hardened by the hammer of necessity, an address which is equal to any mode of action, impudence, and, above all, the coolness, presence of mind, and swift apprehension of affairs, which are combined to make a *bravo* of scheming and superior policy. Such an instrument is at once rare and indispensable. De Marsay intentionally secured to Maxime de Trailles a firm footing in the highest social circles; he represented him as being a man matured by passion, taught by experience, knowing men and things, to whom traveling and a faculty of observation had given great knowledge of European interests, of foreign Cabinets, and of the connections of all the great continental families. De Marsay impressed on Maxime the necessity for doing himself credit; he explained to him that discretion was not so much a virtue as a good speculation; he proved to him that power never evades the touch of a strong and trustworthy tool, at the same time elegant and polished.

"In political life you can only squeeze a man once," said he, blaming him for having uttered a threat.

And Maxime was the man to understand all the significance of the axiom.

At de Marsay's death, Comte Maxime de Trailles fell back into his old life. He went every year to gamble at watering-places, and returned to spend the winter in Paris; but, although he received from time to time some considerable sums dug out of the depths of very tight-locked chests, this sort of half-pay due to a man of spirit, who might at any moment be made use of, and who was in the confidence of many mysteries of antagonistic diplomates, was insufficient for the extravagant splendor of a life like that of this king of the dandies, the tyrant of four or five Paris clubs. Hence the Count had many hours of uneasiness over the financial question.

Having no estates or investments, he had never been able to strengthen his position by being elected député; and having no ostensible duties, it was out of his power to hold the knife to a great man's throat, and get himself made a peer of France. And time was gaining on him; dissipation of all kinds had damaged his health and person. In spite of a handsome appearance, he knew it; he did not deceive himself. He determined to settle, to marry. He was too clever a man to overestimate the true value of his position; it was, he knew, an illusion. So he could not find a wife in the highest Paris society, nor in the middle class. He required a vast amount of spite, with apparent sincerity and real service done, to make himself acceptable; for every one hoped for his fall, and a vein of ill-luck might be his ruin.

If once he should find himself in prison, at Clichy or abroad, as a result of some bill of exchange that he failed to negotiate, he would drop into the gulf where so many political dead men are to be seen who do not comfort each other. At this very hour he was dreading the falling stones from some portions of the awful vault which debts build up over many a Parisian head. He had allowed his anxiety to be seen in his face; he had refused to play here at Madame d'Espard's; he had been absent-minded while talking to ladies; and he had ended by sitting mute and absorbed in the armchair from which he now rose like Banquo's ghost.

Comte Maxime de Trailles, standing in the middle of the fire-front, under the cross-lights of two large candelabra, found himself the centre of direct or indirect observation. The few words that had been said required him to assume an attitude of defiance; and he stood there like a man of spirit, but without arrogance, determined to show himself superior to suspicion. A painter could not have had a more favorable moment for sketching this really remarkable man.

For must not a man have extraordinary gifts to play such a part as his, to have fascinated women for thirty years, to have commanded himself to use his talents only in a secret

sphere—exciting a people to rebel, discovering the mysteries of the astutest politicians, and triumphing only in ladies' boudoirs or men's private rooms? Is there not something grand in being able to rise to the highest schemes of political life, and then calmly drop back into the insignificance of a frivolous existence? A man must be of iron who can live through the alternations of the gaming table and the sudden journeys of a political agent, who can keep up the war footing of elegance and fashion and the expenses of necessary civilities to the fair sex, whose memory is a perfect library of craft and falsehood, who can hide so many and such different ideas, and so many tricks of craft, under such impenetrable suavity of manner. If the breeze of favor had blown steadily on those ever-spread sails, if the course of events had served Maxime better, he might have been a Mazarin, a Maréchal de Richelieu, a Potemkin—or perhaps, more exactly, a Lauzun, *minus* Pignerol.

The Count, a fairly tall man, and not inclining to be fat, had a certain amount of stomach; but he suppressed it majestically—to use Brillat-Savarin's words. His clothes, too, were so well made that his figure preserved a youthful aspect, and there was something light and easy in his movements, which was due, no doubt, to constant exercise, to the habit of fencing, riding, and shooting. Maxime had, in fact, all the physical grace and distinction of an aristocrat, enhanced by his admirable "get-up." His face was long, of the Bourbon type, framed in whiskers and a beard under his chin, carefully cut and curled, and as black as jet. This hue, matching that of his thick hair, was preserved by the use of an Indian cosmetic, very expensive, and known only in Persia, of which Maxime kept the secret. He thus cheated the keenest eye as to the white hairs which had long since streaked the natural black. The peculiarity of this dye, used by the Persians for thin beards, is that it does not make the features look hard; it can be softened by an admixture of indigo, and harmonizes with the color of the skin. This, no doubt, was the operation seen by Madame Mollot; but it remains to this

day a standing joke at Arcis to wonder now and again, at the evening meetings, "what Madame Mollot did see."

Maxime had a fine forehead, blue eyes, a Grecian nose, a pleasant mouth, and well-shaped chin; but all round his eyes were a myriad wrinkles, as fine as if they had been marked with a razor—invisible, in fact, at a little distance. There were similar lines on his temples, and all his face was a good deal wrinkled. His eyes, like those of gamblers who have sat up night after night, were covered with a sort of glaze; but their look, if dimmed, was only the more terrible—nay, terrifying. It so evidently covered a brooding fire, the lavas of half-extinguished passions. The mouth too, once fresh and scarlet, had a cold shade, and it was not quite straight; the right-hand corner drooped a little. This sinuous line seemed to hint at falsehood. Vice had disfigured the smile, but his teeth were still sound and white.

These blemishes, too, were overlooked in the general effect of his face and figure. His grace was still so attractive that no younger man could compare with Maxime on horseback in the Bois de Boulogne, where he appeared more youthful and graceful than the youngest and most graceful of them all. This privilege of eternal youth has been seen in some men of our day.

De Trailles was all the more dangerous because he seemed yielding and indolent, and never betrayed his obstinate foregone conclusions on every subject. This charming indifference, which enabled him to back up a seditious mob with as much skill as he could have brought to bear on a Court intrigue to strengthen the position of a King, had a certain charm. No one, especially in France, ever distrusts what seems calm and homogeneous; we are accustomed to so much stir about trifles.

The Count, dressed in the fashion of 1839, had on a black coat, a dark blue cashmere waistcoat embroidered with light blue sprigs, black trousers, gray silk socks, and patent leather shoes. His watch, in his waistcoat pocket, was secured through a button-hole by a neat gold chain.

"Rastignac," said he, as he accepted the cup of tea held out to him by the pretty Countess, "will you come with me to the Austrian embassy?"

"My dear fellow, I am too recently married not to go home with my wife."

"Which means that by and by——?" said the young Countess, looking round at her husband.

"By and by is the end of the world," replied Maxime. "But if you make madame the judge, that will win the case for me, I think?"

Count Maxime, with a graceful gesture, drew the pretty Countess to his side; she listened to a few words he said, and then remarked, "If you like to go to the embassy with Monsieur de Trailles, my mother will take me home."

A few minutes later the Baronne de Nucingen and the Comtesse de Rastignac went away together. Maxime and Rastignac soon followed; and when they were sitting together in the carriage:

"What do you want of me, Maxime?" asked the husband. "What is the hurry, that you take me by the throat? And what did you say to my wife?"

"That I wanted to speak to you," replied Monsieur de Trailles. "You are a lucky dog, you are! You have ended by marrying the sole heiress of the Nucingen millions—but you have worked for it. Twenty years of penal servitude——"

"Maxime!"

"While I find myself looked at askance by everybody," he went on, without heeding the interruption. "A wretched creature—a du Tillet—asks if I have courage enough to kill myself! It is time to see where we stand.—Do they want me out of the way, or do they not? You can find out—you *must* find out," said Maxime, silencing Rastignac by a gesture. "This is my plan; listen to it. You ought to do me a service—I have served you, and can serve you again. The life I am leading bores me, and I want a pension. Help me to conclude a marriage which will secure me half a million; once

married, get me sent as Minister to some wretched American republic. I will stay there long enough to justify my appointment to a similar post in Germany. If I am good for anything, I shall be promoted; if I am good for nothing, I shall be cashiered.—I may have a son; I will bring him up strictly; his mother will be rich; I will train him to diplomacy; he may become an ambassador!"

"And this is my answer," said Rastignac. "There is a harder struggle to be fought out than the outside world imagines between a power in swaddling clothes and a child in power. The power in swaddling clothes is the Chamber of Deputies, which, not being restrained by a hereditary Chamber——"

"Aha!" said Maxime, "you are a peer of France!"

"And shall I not remain so under any government?" said the newly-made peer. "But do not interrupt, you are interested in all this muddle. The Chamber of Deputies will inevitably be the whole of the Government, as Marsay used to tell us—the only man who might have rescued France; for a nation does not die; it is slave or free, that is all. The child in power is the dynasty crowned in the month of August 1830.

"The present Ministry is beaten; it has dissolved the Chamber, and will call a general election to prevent the next Ministry from having the chance; but it has no hope of a victory. If it should be victorious in the elections, the dynasty would be in danger; whereas, if the Ministry is turned out, the dynastic party may struggle on and hold its own for some time yet. The blunders of the Chamber will turn to the advantage of a Will, which, unfortunately, is the mainspring of politics. When one man is all in all, as Napoleon was, the moment comes when he must have representatives; and as superior men are rejected, the great Head is not represented. The representative is called the Cabinet, and in France there is no Cabinet—only a Will for life. In France only those who govern can blunder, the Opposition can never blunder; it may lose every battle and be none the worse; it

is enough if, like the Allies in 1814, it wins but one victory. With 'three glorious days' is could destroy everything. Hence not to govern, but to sit and wait, is to be the next heir to power. Now, my personal feelings are on the side of the aristocracy, my public opinions on that of the dynasty of July. The House of Orleans has helped me to reinstate the fortunes of my family, and I am attached to it for ever."

"The for ever of Monsieur de Talleyrand, of course," de Trailles put in.

"So at the present moment I can do nothing for you," Rastignac went on. "We shall not be in power these six months. —Yes, for those six months we shall be dying by inches; I have always known it. We knew our fate from the first; we were but a stop-gap ministry.—But if you distinguish yourself in the thick of the electoral fray that is beginning, if you become a vote—a member—faithful to the reigning dynasty, your wishes shall be attended to. I can say a great deal about your zeal, I can poke my nose into every secret document, every private and confidential letter, and find you some tough place to work up. If you succeed, I can urge your claims—your skill and devotion—and demand the reward.

"As to your marriage, my dear fellow, that can only be arranged in the country with some family of ambitious manufacturers. In Paris you are too well known. The thing to find is a millionaire, a parvenu, with a daughter, and possessed with the ambition to swagger at the Tuileries."

"Well; but get your father-in-law to lend me twenty-five thousand francs to carry me over meanwhile; then he will be interested in my not being dismissed with empty promises, and will promote my marriage."

"You are wide-awake, Maxime, and you do not trust me, but I like a clever fellow; I will arrange that little business for you."

The carriage stopped.

The Comte de Rastignac saw the Minister of the Interior in the Embassy drawing-room, and drew him into a corner. The Comte de Trailles was apparently devoting himself to the

old Comtesse de Listomère, but in reality he was watching the two men; he marked their gestures, interpreted their glances, and at last caught a friendly look towards himself from the Minister's eye.

Maxime and Rastignac went away together at one in the morning, and before they each got into his own carriage, Rastignac said on the stairs:

"Come to see me when the elections are coming on. Between this and then I shall find out where the Opposition is likely to be strongest, and what remedy may be devised by two such minds as ours."

"I am in a hurry for those twenty-five thousand francs!" replied de Trailles.

"Well, keep out of sight."

About seven weeks later, one morning before it was light, the Comte de Trailles drove mysteriously in a hackney cab to the Rue de Varenne. He dismissed the cab on arriving at the door of the Minister of Public Works, looked to see that he was not watched, and then waited in a small room on the first floor till Rastignac should be up. In a few minutes the man-servant, who had carried in Maxime's card, showed him into his master's room, where the great man was finishing his toilet.

"My dear fellow," said the Minister, "I can tell you a secret which will be published in the newspapers within two days, and which you can turn to good account. That poor Charles Keller, who danced the mazurka so well, has been killed in Africa, and he was our candidate for the borough and district of Arcis. His death leaves a gap. Here are copies of the two reports—one from the Sous-préfet, the other from the Police Commissioner—informing the Ministry that there were difficulties in the way of our poor friend's election. In the Police Commissioner's letter you will find some information as to the state of the town which will be sufficient to guide a man of your ability, for the ambition of poor Charles Keller's opponent is founded on his wish to marry an heiress. To a man like you this is hint enough.—The Cinq-Cygnes, the

Princesse de Cadignan, and Georges de Maufrigneuse are within a stone's throw of Arcis; you could at need secure the legitimist votes.—So——"

"Do not wear your tongue out," said Maxime. "Is the Police Commissioner still at Arcis?"

"Yes."

"Give me a line to him."

"My dear fellow," said Rastignac, giving Maxime a packet of papers, "you will find there two letters written to Gondreville to introduce you. You have been a page, he was a senator—you will understand each other.—Madame François Keller is addicted to piety; here is a letter to her from the Maréchale de Carigliano. The Maréchale is now Orleanist; she recommends you warmly, and will, in fact, be going to Arcis.—I have only one word to add: Be on your guard against the Sous-préfet; I believe him to be very capable of taking up this Simon Giguet as an advocate with the ex-President of the Council. If you need more letters, powers, introductions—write to me."

"And the twenty-five thousand francs?" asked Maxime.

"Sign this bill on du Tillet; here is the money."

"I shall succeed," said the Count, "and you can promise the authorities that the Member for Arcis will be theirs, body and soul. If I fail, pitch me overboard!"

And within an hour Maxime de Trailles, driving his tilbury, was on the road to Arcis.

As soon as he was furnished with the information supplied by the landlady of the *Mulet* and Antonin Goulard, Monsieur de Trailles lost no time in arranging the plan of his electoral campaign—a plan so obvious that the reader will have divined it at once. This shrewd agent for his own private politics at once set up Philéas as the candidate in opposition to Simon Giguet; and, notwithstanding that the man was an unlikely cipher, the idea, it must be admitted, had strong chances in its favor. Beauvisage, as wearing the halo of municipal authority, had, with the great mass of indifferent voters, the advantage of being known by reputation.

Logic rules the development of affairs here below more than might be supposed—it is like a wife to whom, after every infidelity, a man is sure to return.

Plain sense demands that the electors called upon to choose a representative of their common interests should always be amply informed as to his fitness, his honesty, and his character. In practice, no doubt, this theory is often considerably strained; but whenever the electoral flock is left to follow its instincts, and can believe that it is voting in obedience to its own lights and intelligence, it may be trusted to throw zeal and conscious pride into its decisions; hence, while knowing their man is half the battle in the electoral sense, to know his name is, at any rate, a good beginning.

Among lukewarm voters, beginning with the most fervent, Philéas was certain, in the first instance, to secure the Gondreville party. Any candidate would be certain of the support of the *Viceroy* of Arcis, if it were only to punish the audacity of Simon Giguet. The election of an upstart, in the very act of flagrant ingratitude and hostility, would cast a slur on the Comte de Gondreville's provincial supremacy, and must be averted at any cost. Still, Beauvisage must expect, at the first announcement of his parliamentary ambition, a far from flattering or encouraging expression of surprise on the part of his father-in-law Grévin. The old man had, once for all, taken his son-in-law's measure; and to a mind as well balanced and clear as his, the notion of Philéas as a statesman would have the same unpleasant effect as a startling discord has on the ear. Also, if it is true that no man is a prophet in his own country, he is still less so in his own family, where any recognition of even the most indisputable success is grudged or questioned long after it has ceased to be doubted by the outer world. But, the first shock over, Grévin would probably become accustomed to an alternative, which, after all, was not antagonistic to his own notions for the future existence of Séverine. And then what sacrifice would he not be ready to make to save the high influence of the Gondrevilles, so evidently endangered?

To the legitimist and republican parties, neither of which could have any weight in the elections excepting to turn the scale, Monsieur de Trailles' nominee had one strange recommendation—namely, his acknowledged ineptitude. These two fractional elements of the anti-dynastic opposition knew that neither was strong enough to return a member; hence they would probably be eager to embrace an opportunity of playing a trick on what they disdainfully called the established order of things; and it might confidently be expected that, in cheerful desperation, they would heartily contribute to the success of a candidate so grossly ridiculous as to reflect a broad beam of ridicule on the Government that could support his election. Finally, in the suffrages of the Left Centre, which had provisionally accepted Simon Giguet as its candidate, Beauvisage would give rise to a strong secession, since he too gave himself out as opposed to the reigning dynasty; and Monsieur de Trailles, pending further orders, while assuring the Mayor of the support of the Ministry, meant to encourage that political bias, which was undoubtedly the most popular on the scene of operations.

Whatever budget of convictions the incorruptible representative might carry with him to Paris, his horoscope was drawn; it was quite certain that on his very first appearance at the Tuileries, august fascination would win him over to fanaticism, if the mere snares of ministerial enticement were not enough to produce that result.

Public interest being so satisfactorily arranged for, the electoral agent had now to consider the personal question: Whether, while manufacturing a deputy, he could find the stuff that would also make a father-in-law. The first point—the fortune, and the second point—the young lady, met his views; the first without dazzling him, the second without his being blind to the defects of a provincial education which must be corrected from the beginning, but which would probably not offer any serious resistance to his skilful marital guidance. Madame Beauvisage carried her husband away by storm; she was an ambitious woman, who, in spite of her

four-and-forty years, still seemed conscious of a heart. Consequently, the best game to play would perhaps be a feint attack on her, to be subsequently turned on the daughter.

How far must the advanced works be carried? A question to be answered as circumstances might direct. In any case, so far as the two women were concerned, Maxime felt that he had the strong recommendation of his title, his reputation as a man of fashion, and his peculiar fitness to initiate them into the elegant and difficult arcana of Paris life; and, finally, as the founder of Beauvisage's political fortunes, which promised such a happy revolution in the life of these two exiled ladies, might not Monsieur de Trailles expect to find them enthusiastically grateful?

At the same time, there remained one serious difficulty in the way of a successful matrimonial campaign. He must obtain the consent of old Grévin, who was not the man to allow Cécile's marriage without making the strictest inquiries into the past career of her suitor. Now, in the event of such an inquiry, was there not some fear that a punctilious old man might fail to find a record of such complete security and conventional virtues as his prudence might insist on?

The semi-governmental mission which had brought Monsieur de Trailles to Arcis would indeed give a semblance of such importance and amendment as might be calculated to neutralize the effect of certain items of information. And if, before this mission were made public, it were confided as a great secret to Grévin by Gondreville, the old man's vanity would be flattered, and that would score in Maxime's favor.

He then resolved, in this difficult predicament, to adopt the very old trick attributed to Gribouille, consisting in throwing himself into the water to avoid getting wet. He would anticipate the old notary's suspicions; he himself would seem to doubt his own prudence; and, by way of a precaution against the temptations that had so long beset him, he determined to make it a preliminary condition that Cécile's fortune should be expressly settled on herself. By this

means they would feel safe against any relapse on his part into habits of extravagance.

It would be his business to acquire such influence over his young wife as would enable him, by acting on her feelings, to recover the conjugal authority of which such a marriage-contract would deprive him.

At first nothing occurred to make him doubt the wisdom and perspicacity of all these projects. As soon as it was mooted, the nomination of Beauvisage caught fire like a train of gunpowder; and Monsieur de Trailles thought the success of all his schemes so probable, that he felt justified in writing to Rastignac, pledging himself to carry out his mission with the happiest and completest results.

But, suddenly, in opposition to Beauvisage the triumphant, another candidate appeared on the scene; and, it may be incidentally noted, that, for the good fortune of this piece of history, the competitor presented himself under conditions so exceptional and so unforeseen that, instead of a picture of petty conflicts attending a country election, it may very probably afford the interest of a far more exciting drama.

The man who intervenes in this narrative to fill so high a calling will be called upon to play so important a part that it is necessary to introduce him by a somewhat lengthy retrospective explanation. But at the stage we have reached, to interrupt the story by a sort of argument in the middle would be a breach of all the laws of art, and expose me to the wrath of the Critic, that sanctimonious guardian of literary orthodoxy.

In the presence of such a dilemma, the author would find himself in serious difficulties, but that his lucky star threw in his way a correspondence in which he found every detail he could wish to place before the reader set forth in order, with a brilliancy and vividness he could not have hoped to achieve.

These letters are worthy of being read with attention. While they bring on to the scene many actors in the Human Comedy who have appeared before, they explain a number

of facts indispensable to the understanding and progress of this particular drama. When they have been presented, and the narrative thus brought up to the point where it now apparently breaks off, it will resume its course without any hiatus; and the author flatters himself that the introduction for a time of the epistolary form, instead of destroying its unity, may, in fact, enhance it.

PART II.

EDIFYING LETTERS

*The Comte de l'Estorade to Marie-Gaston.**

My dear Sir,—In obedience to your request, I have seen M. the Préfet of Police, to ascertain whether the pious purpose of which you speak in your letter dated from Carrara will meet with any opposition on the part of the authorities. He informs me that the Imperial decree of the 23rd Prairial of the year XII., which is still paramount on all points connected with interments, establishes beyond a doubt the right of every landowner to be buried in his own ground. You have only to apply for permission from the Préfet of the Department—Seine-et-Oise—and without any further formality, you can transfer the mortal remains of Madame Marie-Gaston to the monument you propose to erect to her in your park at Ville-d'Avray.

But I may now be so bold as to suggest to you some objections. Are you quite sure that difficulties may not be raised by the Chaulieu family, with whom you are not on the best terms? In fact, might they not, up to a certain point, be justified in complaining that, by removing a tomb—dear to them as well as to you—from a public cemetery to private and enclosed ground, you are regulating the visits they may wish to pay to that grave by your own arbitrary will and pleasure? Since, evidently, it will be in your power to prohibit their coming on to your property.

I am well aware that, strictly speaking, a wife, living or dead, belongs to her husband, to the exclusion of all other relationship however near. But if, under the promptings of

* See *Mémoires des deux jeunes Mariées.*

the ill-feeling they have already manifested towards you on more than one occasion, Madame Marie-Gaston's parents should choose to dispute your decision by an action at law, what a painful business it must be! You would gain the day, I make no doubt, the Duc de Chaulieu's influence being no longer what it was at the time of the Restoration; but have you considered what venom an advocate's tongue can infuse into such a question, especially when arguing a very natural claim: that of a father, mother, and two brothers, pleading to be left in possession of the melancholy gratification of praying over a grave?

And if I must indeed tell you my whole mind, it is with deep regret that I find you inventing new forms of cherishing your grief, too long inconsolable. We had hoped that, after spending two years in Italy, you would return more resigned, and would make up your mind to seek some diversion from your sorrow in active life. But this sort of temple to ardent memories which you are proposing to erect in a place where they already crush you too closely, can only prolong their bitterness, and I cannot approve the perennial renewal you will thus confer on them.

However, as we are bound to serve our friends in their own way, I have conveyed your message to Monsieur Dorlange; still, I cannot but tell you that he was far from eager to enter into your views. His first words, when I announced myself as representing you, were that he had not the honor of knowing you; and, strange as the reply may seem to you, it was spoken with such perfect simplicity, that at first I imagined I had made some mistake, some confusion of names. However, as your oblivious friend presently admitted that he had been at school at the college of Tours, and also that he was the same M. Dorlange who, in 1831, had taken the first prize for sculpture under quite exceptional circumstances, I could entertain no doubt as to his identity. I then accounted to myself for his defective memory by the long break in your intercourse, of which you wrote. That neglect must have wounded him more than you imagined;

and when he affected not even to recollect your name, it was a revenge he was not sorry to take.

This, however, is not the real obstacle.

Remembering on what brotherly terms you had formerly been, I could not believe that M. Dorlange's wrath would be inexorable. And so, after explaining to him the work he was invited to undertake, I was about to enter on some explanations as to his grievance against you, when I was met by the most unlooked-for obstacle.

"Indeed," said he, "the importance of the commission you are good enough to propose to me, the assurance that no outlay will be thought too great for the dignity and perfection of the work, the invitation to set out myself for Carrara to superintend the choice and extraction of the marbles,—the whole thing is a piece of such great good fortune for an artist, that at any other time I should have accepted it eagerly. But at this moment, when you honor me with a call, though I have no fixed intention of abandoning my career as an artist, I am possibly about to be launched in political life. My friends are urging me to come forward as a candidate at the coming elections; and, as you will understand, monsieur, if I should be returned, the complication of parliamentary duties, and my initiation into a new experience, would, for some time at any rate, stand in the way of undertaking such a work as you propose, with the necessary leisure and thought. "Also," added M. Dorlange, "I should be working in the service of a great sorrow anxious to find consolation at any cost in the projected monument. That sorrow would naturally be impatient; I should inevitably be slow, disturbed, hindered; it will be better, therefore, to apply to some one else—which does not make me less grateful for the honor and confidence you have shown me."

After listening to this little speech, very neatly turned, as you perceive, it struck me that your friend was anticipating parliamentary triumphs, perhaps a little too confidently, and, for a moment, I thought of hinting at the possibility of his failing at the election, and asking whether, in that

case, I might call on him again. But it is never polite to cast doubts on popular success; and as I was talking to a man already much offended, I would not throw oil on the fire by a question that might have been taken amiss. I merely expressed my regrets, and said I would let you now the result of my visit.

I need hardly say that within a few days I shall have found out what are the prospects of this parliamentary ambition which has arisen so inopportunely in our way. For my part, there seem to me to be a thousand reasons for expecting it to miss fire. Assuming this, you would perhaps do well to write to M. Dorlange; for his manner, though perfectly polite and correct, appeared to confess a still lively memory of some wrong for which you will have to obtain forgiveness. I know that it must be painful to you to explain the very singular circumstances of your marriage, for it will compel you to retrace the days of your happiness, now so cruel a memory. But, judging from what I saw of your old friend, if you are really bent on his giving you the benefit of his talents, if you do not apply to him yourself, but continue to employ a go-between, you will be persisting in a course which he finds disobliging, and expose yourself to a final refusal.

At the same time, if the step I urge on you is really too much for you, there is perhaps another alternative. Madame de l'Estorade has always seemed to me a very tactful negotiator in any business she undertakes, and in this particular instance I should feel entire confidence in her skill. She endured, from Madame Marie-Gaston's gusts of selfish passion, treatment much like that of which Monsieur Dorlange complains. She, better than anybody, will be in a position to explain to him the absorbing cares of married life which you shut in its own narrow folds; and it seems to me that the example of long-suffering and patience which she always showed to her whom she would call her "dear crazy thing," cannot fail to infect your friend.

You have ample time to think over the use you may wish to make of the opening that thus offers. Madame de

l'Estorade is just now suffering from a nervous shock, the result of a terrible fright. A week ago our dear little Naïs was within an ace of being crushed before her eyes; and but for the courage of a stranger who rushed at the horses' heads and brought them up short, God knows what dreadful misfortune would have befallen us. This fearful moment produced in Madame de l'Estorade an attack of nervous excitement which made us for a time excessively anxious. Though she is much better to-day, it will be some days yet before she can see Monsieur Dorlange, supposing you should think her feminine intervention desirable and useful.

Still, once again, my dear sir, would it not be wiser to give up your idea? All I can foresee as the outcome for you is enormous expense, unpleasant squabbles with the Chaulieus, and a renewal of your sorrows. Notwithstanding, I am none the less at your service in and for anything, as I cannot fail to be, from every sentiment of esteem and friendship.

The Comtesse de l'Estorade to Madame Octave de Camps.

Paris, *February* 1839.

Dear Friend,—Of all the expressions of sympathy that have reached me since the dreadful accident to my poor child, none has touched me more deeply than your kind letter. To answer your affectionate inquiry, I must say that in that terrible moment Naïs was marvelously composed and calm. It would be impossible, I think, to see death more imminent, but neither at the time nor afterwards did the brave child flinch; everything shows her to have a firm nature, and her health, thank God, has not suffered in the faintest degree.

I, for my part, as a consequence of my intense fright, have had an attack of spasmodic convulsions, and for some days, it would seem, alarmed my doctor, who feared I might go out of my mind. Thanks, however, to a strong constitution, I am now almost myself again, and no traces would remain of that painful shock if it had not, by a singular fatality, been connected with another unpleasant circum-

stance which had for some time thought fit to fill a place in my life.

Even before this latest kind assurance of your good-will towards me, I had thought of turning to the help of your friendship and advice; and now, when you are so good as to write that you would be happy and proud if in any degree you might take the place of poor Louise de Chaulieu, the dear, incomparable friend snatched from me by death, how can I hesitate? I take you at your word, my dear madame, and boldly request you to exert in my favor the delicate skill which enabled you to defy impertinent comment when the impossibility of announcing your marriage to Monsieur de Camps exposed you to insolent and perfidious curiosity—the peculiar tact by which you extricated yourself from a position of difficulty and danger—in short, the wonderful art which allowed you at once to keep your secret and maintain your dignity. I need their help in the disagreeable matter to which I have alluded. Unfortunately, to benefit by the doctor's advice, the patient must explain the case; and here M. de Camps, with his genius for business, seems to me an atrocious person. Owing to those odious forges he has chosen to buy, you are as good as dead to Paris and the world. Of old, when you were at hand, in a quarter of an hour's chat I could have told the whole story without hesitancy or preparation; as it is, I have to think it all out and go through the solemn formality of a confession in black and white.

After all, effrontery will perhaps best serve my turn; and since, in spite of circumlocutions and preambles, I must at last come to the point, why not confess at once that at the kernel of the matter is that very stranger who rescued my poor little girl. A stranger—be it clearly understood—to M. de l'Estorade, and to all who may have reported the accident; a stranger to the whole world, if you please—but not to your humble servant, whom this man has for three months past condescended to honor with the most persistent attention. It cannot seem any less preposterous to you than it

does to me, my dear friend, that I, at two-and-thirty, with three children, one a tall son of fifteen, should have become the object of unremitting devotion, and yet that is the absurd misfortune against which I have to protect myself.

And when I say that I know the unknown, this is but partly true: I know neither his name nor his place of residence, nor anything about him; I never met him in society; and I may add that though he has the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, nothing in his appearance, which has no trace of elegance, leads me to suppose that I ever shall meet him in society.

It was at the Church of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, where, as you know, I was in the daily habit of attending Mass, that this annoying "shadowing" first began. I also took the children out walking in the Tuileries almost every day, M. de l'Estorade having taken a house without a garden. This custom was soon noted by my persecutor, and gave him boldness; for wherever I was to be found out of doors I had to put up with his presence. But this singular adorer was as prudent as he was daring; he always avoided following me to my door; and he steered his way at such a distance and so undemonstratively, that I had at any rate the comforting certainty that his foolish assiduity could not attract the notice of anybody who was with me. And yet, Heaven alone knows to what inconveniences and privations I have submitted to put him off my track. I never entered the church but on Sunday; and to the risk of the dear children's health I have often kept them at home, or invented excuses for not going out with them, leaving them to the servants—against all my principles of education and prudence.

Visits, shopping—I can do nothing but in a carriage; and all this could not hinder that, just when I fancied I had routed this tiresome person and exhausted his patience, he was on the spot to play so brave and providential a part in that dreadful accident to Naïs. But it is this very obligation which I now owe him that introduces a vexatious complication into a position already so awkward. If I had at last

been too much annoyed by his persistency I might by some means, even by some decisive action, have put an end to his persecution; but now, if he comes across my path, what can I do? How am I to proceed? Merely to thank him would be to encourage him; and even if he should not try to take advantage of my civilities to alter our relative position, I should have him at my heels closer than ever.—Am I then not to notice him, to affect not to recognize him? But, my dear madame, think! A mother who owes her child's life to his efforts and pretends not to perceive it—who has not a word of gratitude——!

This, then, is the intolerable dilemma in which I find myself, and you can see how sorely I need your advice and judgment. What can I do to break the odious habit this gentleman has formed of following me like my shadow? How am I to thank him without exciting his imagination, or to avoid thanking him without suffering the reproaches of my conscience? This is the problem I submit to your wisdom.

If you will do me the service of solving it—and I know no one else so capable—I shall add my gratitude to the affection which, as you know, dear madame, I already feel for you.

The Comte de l'Estorade to Marie-Gaston.

PARIS, *February* 1839.

The public prints, my dear sir, may have been beforehand in giving you an account of a meeting between your friend M. Dorlange and the Duc de Rhétoré. But the newspapers, by announcing the bare facts—since custom and propriety do not allow them to expatiate on the motives of the quarrel—will only have excited your curiosity without satisfying it. I happen to know on good authority all the details of the affair, and I hasten to communicate them to you, as they must to you be of the greatest interest.

Three days ago, that is to say, on the evening of the day when I had called on M. Dorlange, the Duc de Rhétoré was in a stall at the opera. M. de Ronquerolles, who has lately

returned from a diplomatic mission that had detained him far from Paris for some years, presently took the seat next to him. Between the acts these gentlemen did not leave their place to walk in the gallery; but, as is commonly done in the theatre, they stood up with their back to the stage, consequently facing M. Dorlange, who sat behind them and seemed absorbed in the evening's news. There had been a very uproarious scene in the Chamber—what is termed a very interesting debate.—The conversation turned very naturally on the events in Paris society during M. de Ronquerolles' absence, and he happened to make this remark, which, of course, attracted M. Dorlange's attention:

"And that poor Madame de Macumer—what a sad end, and what a strange marriage!"

"Oh, you know," said M. de Rhétoré in the high-pitched tone he affects, "my sister had too much imagination not to be a little chimerical and romantic. She was passionately in love with M. de Macumer, her first husband; still, one may tire of all things, even of widowhood. This M. Marie-Gaston came in her way. He is attractive in person; my sister was rich, he very much in debt; he was proportionately amiable and attentive; and, on my honor, the rogue managed so cleverly, that, after stepping into M. de Macumer's shoes, and making his wife die of jealousy, he got out of her everything that the law allowed the poor silly woman to dispose of.—Louise left a fortune of at least twelve hundred thousand francs, to say nothing of magnificent furniture and a delightful villa she had built at Ville-d'Avray. Half of this came to our gentleman, the other half to my father and mother, the Duc and Duchesse de Chaulieu, who, as parents, had a right to that share. As to my brother Lenoncourt and me—we were simply disinherited for our portion."

As soon as your name was pronounced, my dear sir, M. Dorlange laid down his paper; then, as M. de Rhétoré ceased speaking, he rose.

"I beg your pardon, M. le Duc, for taking the liberty of correcting your statements; but, as a matter of conscience,

I must assure you that you are to the last degree misinformed."

"You say?——" replied the Duke, half closing his eyes, and in a tone of contempt which you can easily imagine.

"I say, Monsieur le Duc, that Marie-Gaston has been my friend from childhood, and that he has never been called a *rogue*. On the contrary, he is a man of honor and talent; and far from making his wife die of jealousy, he made her perfectly happy during three years of married life. As to her fortune——"

"You have considered the consequences of this step?" said the Duke, interrupting him.

"Certainly, monsieur. And I repeat that, with regard to the fortune left to Marie-Gaston by a special provision in his wife's will, he coveted it so little that, to my knowledge, he is about to devote a sum of two or three hundred thousand francs to the erection of a monument to the wife he has never ceased to mourn."

"And, after all, monsieur, who are you?" the Duc de Rhétoré broke in again, with growing irritation.

"In a moment I shall have the honor to inform you," replied M. Dorlange. "But, first, you will allow me to add that Madame Marie-Gaston could have no pangs of conscience in disposing as she did of the fortune of which you have been deprived. All her wealth, as a matter of fact, came to her from M. le Baron de Macumer, her first husband, and she had previously renounced her patrimony to secure an adequate position to your brother, M. le Duc de Lenoncourt-Givry, who, as a younger son, had not, like yourself, M. le Duc, the benefit of the entail."

M. Dorlange felt in his pocket for his card-case, but it was not there.

"I have no cards about me," he said; "but my name is Dorlange—a sort of stage-name, and easy to remember—42 Rue de l'Ouest."

"Not a very central position," M. de Rhétoré remarked ironically.

At the same time he turned to M. de Ronquerolles, and taking him as a witness and as his second:

"I must apologize to you, my dear fellow," said he, "for sending you on a voyage of discovery to-morrow morning." Then he added, "Come to the smoking-room; we can talk there in peace, and at any rate in *security*."

By the emphasis he laid on the last word, it was impossible to misunderstand the innuendo it was meant to convey. The two gentlemen went out, without the scene having given rise to any commotion or fuss, since the stalls all round them were empty, and M. Dorlange then caught sight of M. Stidmann, the famous sculptor, at the other end of the stalls. He went up to him.

"Do you happen to have," said he, "such a thing as a memorandum or sketch book in your pocket?"

"Yes—always."

"Then would you lend it me and allow me to tear a leaf out? I have just had an idea that I do not want to lose. If I should not see you as you go out, to return the book, you shall have it without fail to-morrow morning."

On returning to his seat, M. Dorlange made a hasty pencil sketch; and when the curtain rose, and MM. de Rhétoré and de Ronquerolles came back to their places, he lightly touched the Duke on the shoulder, and handing him the drawing, he said, "My card, which I have the honor of giving to your grace."

The card was a pretty sketch of sculpturesque architecture set in a landscape. Underneath it was written: "Sketch for a monument to be erected to the memory of Madame Marie-Gaston, *née* Chaulieu, by her husband, from the designs of Charles Dorlange, sculptor, Rue de l'Ouest, 42."

He could have found no more ingenious way of intimating to M. de Rhétoré that he had no mean adversary; and you may observe, my dear sir, that M. Dorlange thus gave weight to his denial by giving substance, so to speak, to his statement as to your disinterestedness and conjugal devotion and grief.

The performance ended without any further incident. M. de Rhétoré parted from M. de Ronquerolles.

M. de Ronquerolles then addressed M. Dorlange, very courteously endeavoring to effect a reconciliation, observing that though he might be in the right, his conduct was unconventional and offensive, that M. de Rhétoré had behaved with great moderation, and would certainly accept the very slightest expression of regret—in fact, said everything that could be said on such an occasion. M. Dorlange would not hear of anything approaching an apology, and on the following day he received a visit from M. de Ronquerolles and General de Montriveau as representing M. de Rhétoré. Again they were urgent that M. Dorlange should consent to express himself in different language. But your friend would not be moved from this ultimatum.

"Will M. de Rhétoré withdraw the expressions I felt myself bound to take exception to? If so, I will retract mine."

"That is impossible," said they. "The offence was personal to M. de Rhétoré, to you it was not. Rightly or wrongly, he firmly believes that M. Marie-Gaston did him an injury. Allowance must always be made for damaged interests; perfect justice is never to be got from them."

"So that M. le Duc may continue to slander my friend at his pleasure!" said M. Dorlange, "since, in the first place, my friend is in Italy; and in the second, he would always, if possible, avoid coming to extreme measures with his wife's brother. And," he added, "it is precisely this impossibility of his defending himself which gives me a right—nay more, makes it my duty to intervene. It was by a special grace of Providence that I was enabled to catch some of the malignant reports that are flying about on the wing; and since M. le Duc de Rhétoré sees no reason to mitigate his language, we will, if you please, carry the affair through to the end."

The dispute being reduced to these terms, the duel was inevitable, and in the course of the day the seconds on both sides arranged the conditions. The meeting was fixed for the next morning; the weapons, pistols. On the ground, M.

Dorlange was perfectly cool. After exchanging shots without effect, as the seconds seemed anxious to stop the proceedings—

"Come," said he cheerfully, "one shot more!" as if he were firing at a dummy in a shooting gallery.

This time he was wounded in the fleshy part of the thigh, not a dangerous wound, but one which bled very freely. While he was being carried to the carriage in which he had come, M. de Rhétoré was anxiously giving every assistance, and when he was close to him—"All the same," said Dorlange, "Marie-Gaston is an honest gentleman, a heart of gold——" and he fainted away almost as he spoke.

This duel, as you may suppose, my dear sir, has been the talk of the town; I have only had to keep my ears open to collect any amount of information concerning M. Dorlange, for he is the lion of the day, and all yesterday it was impossible to go into a house where he was not the subject of conversation. My harvest was chiefly gathered at Mme. de Montcornet's. She, as you know, has a large acquaintance among artists and men of letters; and to give you a notion of the position your friend holds in their regard, I need only report a conversation in which I took part last evening in the Countess' drawing-room. The speakers were M. Émile Blondet, of the *Débats;* M. Bixiou the caricaturist, one of the best informed eavesdroppers in Paris—I believe you know them both, but at any rate I am sure that you are intimate with Joseph Bridau, our great painter, who was the third speaker, for I remember that he and Daniel d'Arthez signed for you when you were married.

Bridau was speaking when I joined them.

"Dorlange began splendidly," said he. "There was the touch of a great master even in the work he sent in for competition, to which, under the pressure of opinion, the Academy awarded the prize, though he had laughed very audaciously at their programme."

"Quite true," said M. Bixiou. "And the Pandora he exhibited in 1837, on his return from Rome, was also a very strik-

ing work. But as it won him, out of hand, the Legion of Honor and commissions from the Government and the Municipality, with at least thirty flaming notices in the papers, I doubt if he can ever recover from that success."

"That is a verdict *à la* Bixiou," said Émile Blondet.

"So it is, and with good reason. Did you ever see the man?"

"No, he is seen nowhere."

"True, that is his favorite haunt. He is a bear, but a bear intentionally; out of affectation and deliberate purpose."

"I really cannot see," said Joseph Bridau, "that such a dislike to society is a bad frame of mind for an artist. What can a sculptor, especially, gain by frequenting drawing-rooms where men and women have got into the habit of wearing clothes?"

"Well, even a sculptor may get some amusement which saves him from monomania or brooding. And then he can see how the world wags—that 1839 is neither the fifteenth nor the sixteenth century."

"What!" said Blondet, "do you mean the poor fellow suffers from that delusion?"

"He!—he talks quite glibly of living the life of the artists of mediæval times, with all their universal studies and learning, and the terrific labors which he can conceive of in a society that was still semi-barbarous, but that has no place in ours. He is a guileless dreamer, and never perceives that civilization, by strangely complicating our social intercourse, devotes to business, interest, and pleasure thrice as much time as a less advanced social organization would spend on those objects. Look at the savage in his den! He has nothing to do; but we, with the Bourse, the opera, the newspapers, parliamentary debates, drawing-room meetings, elections, railways, the *Café de Paris,* and the National Guard—when, I ask you, are we to find time for work?"

"A splendid theory for idlers," said Émile Blondet, laughing.

"Not at all, my dear boy; it is perfectly true. The curfew

no longer rings at nine o'clock, I suppose! Well, and only last evening, if my door-porter Ravenouillet didn't give a party! Perhaps I committed a serious blunder by declining the indirect invitation he sent me."

"Still," said Joseph Bridau, "it is evident that a man who is not mixed up with the business interests or pleasures of his age may, out of his savings, accumulate a very pretty capital of time. Dorlange, I fancy, has a comfortable income irrespective of commissions: there is nothing to hinder him from living as he has a mind to live."

"And, as you see, he goes to the opera, since it was there he picked up his duel.—And, indeed, you have hardly hit the nail on the head by representing him as cut off from all contemporary interests, when I happen to know that he is on the point of taking them up on the most stirring and absorbing side of the social machine—namely, politics!"

"What! he thinks he can be a politician?" asked Émile Blondet scornfully.

"It is part, no doubt, of his famous scheme of universal efficiency, and you should see how logically and perseveringly he is carrying out the idea. Last year two hundred and fifty thousand francs fell on him from the sky, and my man purchased a house in the Rue Saint-Martin as a qualification; and then, as another little speculation, with the rest of the money he bought shares in the *National* newspaper, and I find him in the office whenever I am in the mood to have a laugh at the Republican Utopia. There he has his flatterers; they have persuaded him that he is a born orator and will make a sensation in the Chamber. There is, in fact, a talk of working up a constituency to nominate him, and on days when they are very enthusiastic they discover that he is like Danton."

"Oh, this is the climax of burlesque!" said Émile Blondet.

I do not know, my dear sir, whether you have ever observed that men of superior talent are always extremely indulgent. This was now proved in the person of Joseph Bridau.

"I agree with you," said he, "that if Dorlange starts on that

track he is almost certainly lost to art. But, after all, why should he not be a success in the Chamber? He speaks with great fluency, and seems to be full of ideas. Look at Canalis; when he won his election: 'Faugh! a poet!' said one and another, which has not prevented his making himself famous as an orator and being made Minister."

"Well, the first point is to get elected," said Émile Blondet. "What place does Dorlange think of standing for?"

"For one of the rotten boroughs of the *National*, of course," remarked Bixiou. "However, I do not know that the place is yet decided on."

"As a general rule," said the man of the *Débats*, "to be returned as a member, even with the hottest support of your party, requires a somewhat extensive political notoriety, or else, at least, some good provincial status of family or of fortune. Does any one know whether Dorlange can command these elements of success?"

"As to family status, that would be a particular difficulty with him; his family is non-existent to a desperate extent."

"Indeed," said Blondet. "Then he is a natural son?"

"As natural as may be—father and mother alike unknown. But I can quite imagine his being elected; it is the rank and file of his political notions that will be so truly funny."

"He must be a Republican if he is a friend of the gentlemen on the *National*, and has a likeness to Danton."

"Evidently. But he holds his fellow-believers in utter contempt, and says that they are good for nothing but fighting, rough play and big talk. So provisionally he will put up with a monarchy bolstered up by republican institutions—though he asserts that this citizen-kingship must infallibly be undermined by the abuse of private interest which he calls corruption. This would tempt him to join the little Church of the Left Centre; but there again—there is always a but—he can discern nothing but a coalition of ambitious and emasculated men, unconsciously smoothing the way to a revolution which he sees already on the horizon; to his great regret, because in his opinion the masses are neither sufficiently prepared nor

sufficiently intelligent to keep it from slipping through their fingers.

"As to Legitimism, he laughs at it; he will not accept it as a principle under any aspect. He regards it simply as a more definite and time-honored form of hereditary monarchy, allows it no other superiority than that of old wine over new. And while he is neither Legitimist, nor Conservative, nor Left Centre, but a republican who deprecates a republic, he stoutly sets up for being a Catholic and rides the hobby of that party —freedom in teaching; and yet this man, who wants freedom in teaching, is, on the other hand, afraid of the Jesuits, and still talks, as if we were in 1829, of the encroachments of the priestly party and the Congregation.

"And can you imagine, finally, the great party he proposes to form in the Chamber—himself, of course, its leader? That of justice, impartiality, and honesty: as if anything of the kind were to be found in the parliamentary pottage or as if every shade of opinion had not from time immemorial flourished that flag to conceal its ugly emptiness?"

"So that he gives up sculpture once and for all?" said Joseph Bridau.

"Not immediately. He is just finishing a statue of some female Saint, but he will not let anybody see it, and does not mean to exhibit it this year. He has notions of his own about that too."

"Which are——?" asked Émile Blondet.

"That religious works ought not to be displayed to the judgment of criticism and the gaze of a public cankered by scepticism; that, without confronting the turmoil of the world, they ought modestly and piously to take the place for which they were intended."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Blondet. "And such a fervent Catholic could fight a duel?"

"Oh, there is a better joke than that. Catholic as he is, he lives with a woman he brought over from Italy, a sort of goddess of Liberty, who is at the same time his model and his housekeeper."

"What a gossip—what a regular inquiry office that Bixiou is!" they said, as they divided.

They had just been asked by Madame de Montcornet to accept a cup of tea from her fair hands.

As you see, my dear sir, M. Dorlange's political aspirations are not regarded very seriously, most people thinking of them very much as I do myself. I cannot doubt that you will write to him at once to thank him for his zealous intervention to defend you against calumny. His brave devotion has, in fact, filled me with sympathy for him, and I should be really glad to see you making use of your old friendship for him to hinder him from embarking on the thankless track he is so eager to tread. I am not guided by the thought of the drawbacks attributed to him by M. Bixiou, who has a sharp and too ready tongue; like Joseph Bridau, I think little of them; but a mistake that every one must regret, in my opinion, would be to abandon a career in which he has already won a high position, to rush into the political fray. Sermonize him to this effect, and as much as you can, to induce him to stick to Art. Indeed, you yourself are interested in his doing so if you are still bent on his undertaking the work he has so far refused to accept.

In the matter of the personal explanation I advised you to have with him, I may tell you that your task is greatly facilitated. You are not called upon to enter into any of the details that might perhaps be too painful. Mme. de l'Estorade, to whom I have spoken of the mediator's part I proposed that she should play, accepts it with pleasure, and undertakes in half an hour's conversation to dissipate the clouds that may still hang between you and your friend.

While writing you this long letter, I sent to inquire for him: the report is as good as possible, and the surgeons are not in the least uneasy about him, unless some extraordinary and quite unforeseen complications should supervene. He is, it would seem, an object of general interest; for, according to my servant, people are standing in rows waiting to put their names down.

There is this also to be said—M. de Rhétoré is not liked. He is haughty, starch, and not clever. How different from her who dwells in our dearest memory! She was simple and kind, without ever losing her dignity, and nothing could compare with the amiability of her temper, unless it were the brightness of her wit.

The Comtesse de l'Estorade to Madame Octave de Camps.

PARIS, *February* 1839.

Nothing could be better than all you have written, dear madame: it was, in fact, highly probable that this annoying person would not think twice about speaking to me the next time we should meet. His heroism gave him a right to do so, and the most ordinary politeness made it incumbent on him. Unless he were content to pass for the clumsiest of admirers, he could not help asking me how Naïs and I had recovered from the effects of the accident he had been able to forefend. But if, contrary to all expectations, he should persist in not stepping out of his cloud, I was fully determined to act on your wise advice. If the mountain did not come to me, I would go to the mountain. Like *Hippolyte* in *Théramène's* tale, I would "thrust myself on the monster" and fire my gratitude in his teeth. Like you, my dear friend, I quite understood that the real danger of this persecution lay in its continuance, and the inevitable explosion that threatened me sooner or later; the fact that the servants, or the children, might at any moment detect the secret; that I should be exposed to the most odious inferences if it were suspected by others; and, above all, the idea that if this ridiculous mystery should be discovered by M. de l'Estorade and drive him to such lengths as his southern nature and past experience in the army made me imagine only too easily,—all this had spurred me to a point I cannot describe, and I might have gone further even than you advised.—I had not only recognized the necessity for being the first to speak; but under the pretext that my husband would call to thank him under his

own roof, I meant to compel him to give me his name and address, and, supposing he were at all a possible acquaintance, to invite him forthwith to dinner, and thus entice the wolf into the sheepfold.

For, after all, what danger could there be? If he had but a shade of common-sense when he saw the terms I live on with M. de l'Estorade, and my *maniacal* passion for my children, as you call it, in short, the calm regularity of my home-life, would he not understand how vain was his pursuit? At any rate, whether he should persist or no, his vehemence would have lost its perilous out-of-door character. If I was to be persecuted, it would, at any rate, be under my own roof, and I should only have to deal with one of those common adventures to which every woman is more or less liable. And we can always get over such slippery places with perfect credit, so long as we have a real sense of duty and some little presence of mind.

Not, I must tell you, that I have come to this conclusion without a painful effort. When the critical moment should come, I was not at all sure that I should be cool enough to confront the situation with such a high hand as was indispensable. However, I had fully made up my mind; and—you know me—what I have determined on I do.

Well, my dear madame, all this fine scheme, all my elaborate courage, and your not less elaborate foresight, are entirely wasted. Since your last letter the doctor has let me out of his hands. I have been out several times, always majestically surrounded by my children, that their presence, in case I should be obliged to take the initiative, might screen the crudity of such a proceeding. But in vain have I scanned the horizon on all sides out of the corner of my eye, nothing, absolutely nothing, has been visible that bore the least resemblance to a deliverer or a lover, What, now, do you say to this new state of affairs? A minute since I spoke of thrusting myself on the monster. Was this gentleman bent on giving himself the airs of a monster, and of the most dangerous species? How was I to interpret this absence? Had he, with

admirable perspicacity, scented the snare in which we meant to trap him, and was he prudently keeping out of the way? Or was there some deeper motive still? Did this man, in whom I had failed to discern the smallest sign of elegance, carry refinement and delicacy so far as to sacrifice his fancy to his fear of marring a generous action?

But if this were so, he would be really a man to think seriously about; my dear M. de l'Estorade, you must take care of yourself! For, do you know, the attentions of a man of such noble sentiments might prove to be more dangerous than was apparent at a first glance?

You see, my dear friend, I am trying to take the matter lightly, but in my heart of hearts I believe that I sing to keep my courage up. This skilful and unexpected strategy leaves me wondering; and my wonderment brings me back to some other ideas which at first I dismissed from my mind; now, however, I must trouble you with them, as the end of this little annoyance is beyond my ken.

As to my feeling for the man, you will not misunderstand that. He saved my little girl, it is true, but merely to lay me under an obligation. Meanwhile he has upset my pleasantest habits: I am obliged to send the poor children out without me; I cannot go to church as often as I please, since even before the altar he dares to come between me and God; in fact, he has upset that perfect equanimity of thought and feeling which till now has been the joy and the pride of my life. But though this persecution is odious and intolerable, the man has a sort of magnetic power over me that distresses me greatly. I can feel him near me before I see him. His gaze oppresses me without my meeting his eye. He is ugly; but there is something vigorous and strongly marked about him which leaves an impression on the mind; one fancies that he must have some powerful and dominating characteristics. So, do what I will, I cannot hinder his occupying my mind. Now, I feel as if I had got rid of him altogether.—Well, may I say it? I am conscious of a void. I miss him as the ear

misses a sharp and piercing sound that has annoyed it for a long time.

What I am going to add will strike you as very childish, but can we control the mirage of our fancy?—I have often told you of my discussions with Louise de Chaulieu as to the way in which women should deal with life. For my part, I always told her that the frenzy with which she never ceased to seek the Infinite was quite ill regulated, and fatal to happiness. And she would answer: "You, my dearest, have never loved. Love implies a phenomenon so rare, that we may live all our life without meeting the being on whom nature has bestowed the faculty of giving us happiness. If on some glorious day that being appears to wake your heart from its slumbers, you will take quite another tone."

The words of those doomed to die are so often prophetic! Supposing this man should be the serpent, though late, that Louise seemed to threaten me with; good Heavens! That he should ever represent a real danger, that he should ever be able to tempt me from my duty, there is certainly no fear. I am confidently strong as to any such extreme of ill. But I did not—like you, my dear friend—marry a man who was the choice of my heart. It was only by dint of patience, determination, and sense that I built up the austere but solid attachment that binds me to M. de l'Estorade. Hence I cannot but be terrified at the mere idea of anything that might undermine that feeling; and the constant occupation of my mind by another man, even in the form of detestation, must be a real misery to me.

I say to you, as Monsieur, Louis XIV.'s brother, said to his wife when he brought her papers he had just written, for her to decipher them: "See clearly for me, dear madame, read my heart and brain; disperse the mists, allay the antagonistic impulses, the ebb and flow of will which these events have given rise to in my mind." Was not my dear Louise mistaken? Am I not one of those women on whom love, in her sense, has no hold? The "Being who on some glorious day awoke my heart from its slumbers" was my Armand—my

René—my Naïs, three angels for whom and in whom I have hitherto lived; and for me, I feel, there can never be any other passion.

The Comtesse de l'Estorade to Madame Octave de Camps.

PARIS, *March* 1839.

In about the year 1820, two *new boys,* to use my son Armand's technical slang, joined the school at Tours in the same week. One had a charming face; the other might have been called ugly, but that health, honesty, and intelligence beamed in his features and made up for their homeliness and irregularity.—And here you will stop me, dear madame, asking me whether I have quite got over my absorbing idea, that I am in the mood to write you a chapter of a novel? Not at all, and this strange beginning, little as it may seem so, is only the continuation and sequel of my adventure. So I beg you to listen to my tale and not to interrupt. To proceed. Almost from the first, the two boys formed a close friendship; there was more than one reason for their intimacy. One of them—the handsome lad—was dreamy, thoughtful, even a little sentimental; the other eager, impetuous, always burning for action. Thus their two characters supplemented each other—the best possible combination for any union that is to prove lasting. Both, too, had the same stain on their birth. The dreamy boy was the son of the notorious Lady Brandon, born in adultery; he was known as Marie-Gaston, which can hardly be called a name. The other, whose father and mother were both unknown, was called Dorlange—which is not a name at all.—Dorlange, Valmon, Volmar, Derfeuil, Melcourt, these are all names adopted for the stage, and that only in the old-fashioned plays, where they dwell now in company with Arnolphe, Alceste, Clitandre, Damis, Éraste, Philinte, and Arsinoë. So another reason why these unhappy no-man's-sons should cling together for warmth was the cruel desertion they both suffered from. During the seven mortal years of their life at school, not once for a single day, even in holiday

time, did the prison doors open to let them out. At long intervals Marie-Gaston had a visitor in the person of an old nurse who had served his mother. Through this woman's hands came the quarterly payment for his schooling.

The money paid for Dorlange came with perfect regularity from some unknown source through a banker at Tours. One thing was observed—that this youth's weekly allowance was fixed at the highest sum permitted by the college rules, whence it was concluded that his anonymous parents were rich. Owing to this, but yet more to the generous use he made of his money, Dorlange enjoyed a certain degree of consideration among his companions, though he could in any case have commanded it by the prowess of his fist. At the same time, it was remarked, but not loud enough for him to hear, that no one had ever asked to see him in the parlor, nor had anybody outside the house ever taken the smallest interest in him.

These two boys, both destined to fame, were far from brilliant scholars. Though they were neither refractory nor idle, since they did not know any mother to be happy in their success, what could they care for rewards at the end of the year?

And they worked, each after his own fashion. At the age of fifteen, Marie-Gaston had produced a volume of verse: satires, elegies, meditations, to say nothing of two tragedies. As for Dorlange, his studies led him to steal firelogs; out of these, with his knife, he carved virgins, grotesques, schoolmasters and saints, grenadiers, and—in secret—figures of Napoleon.

In 1827 their school days ended; the friends left the Collège de Tours together, and both were sent to Paris. A place had already been secured for Dorlange in Bosio's studio, and thenceforward a certain amount of caprice was discernible in the occult Providence that watched over him. On arriving at the house to which the master of the college had directed him on leaving, he found pleasant rooms prettily furnished for him. Under the glass shade over the clock a large letter, addressed to him, had been so placed as to strike his eye at once. Within the envelope he found a note in these words:

"The day after your arrival in Paris, go, at eight in the morning precisely, to the Garden of the Luxembourg, Allée de l'Observatoire, the fourth bench on the right-hand side from the gate. This is imperative. Do not on any account fail."

Dorlange was punctual, as may be supposed, and had not waited long when he was joined by a little man, two feet high, who, with his enormous head and thick mop of hair, his hooked nose and chin and crooked legs, might have stepped out of one of Hoffmann's fairy tales. Without a word—for to his personal advantages, this messenger added that of being deaf and dumb—he placed in the youth's hands a letter and a purse. The letter said that Dorlange's family were much pleased to find that he had a disposition for the fine arts. He was urged to work hard and profit by the teaching of the great master under whose tuition he was placed. He would, it was hoped, be steady, and an eye would be kept on his behavior. On the other hand, he was not to forego the rational amusements suited to his age. For his needs and his pleasures he might count on a sum of twenty-five louis, which would be paid to him every three months at this same place, by the same messenger. With regard to this emissary, Dorlange was expressly forbidden to follow him when he departed after fulfilling his errand. In case of disobedience, either direct or indirect, the penalty was serious—no less, in fact, than the withdrawal of all assistance, and complete desertion.

Now, my dear friend, do you remember that in 1831 I carried you off to the École des Beaux-Arts, where, at that time, the exhibition used to be held of works competing for the first prize in sculpture? The subject set for the competition had appealed to my heart—Niobe weeping over her children. And do you remember my fury at the work sent in by one of the competitors, round which there was a crowd so dense that we could scarcely get near it? The insolent wretch had made game of the subject. His Niobe, indeed, as I could not but agree with you and the public, was most touching in her beauty and grief; but to have represented her children as so

many monkeys, lying on the ground in the most various and grotesque attitudes—what a deplorable waste of talent! It was in vain that you insisted in pointing out how charming the monkeys were—graceful, witty—and that it was impossible to laugh more ingeniously at the blindness and idolatry of mothers who regard some hideous brat as a masterpiece of Nature's handiwork. I considered the thing a monstrosity; and the indignation of the older academicians, who demanded the solemn erasure of this impertinent work from the list of competing sculpture, was, in my opinion, wholly justified. Yielding, however, to public opinion and to the papers, which spoke of raising a subscription to send the sculptor to Rome if the *Grand Prix* were given to anybody else, the Academy did not agree with me and with its elders. The remarkable beauty of the Niobe outweighed all else, and this slanderer of mothers found his work crowned, though he had to take a pretty severe lecture which the secretary was desired to give him on the occasion. Unhappy youth! I can pity him now, for he never had known a mother.—He was Dorlange, the youth abandoned at the school at Tours, and Marie-Gaston's friend.

For four years, from 1827 till 1831, when Dorlange was sent to Rome, the two young men had never parted. Dorlange, with his allowance of two thousand four hundred francs, always punctually paid by the hand of the mysterious dwarf, was a sort of Marquis d'Aligre. Marie-Gaston, on the contrary, if left to his own resources, would have lived in great penury; but between persons who truly care for each other, a rarer case than is commonly supposed, on one side plenty, and on the other nothing, is a determining cause of their alliance. Without keeping any score, our two pigeons had everything in common—home, money, troubles, pleasures, and hopes; the two lived but one life. Unfortunately for Marie-Gaston, his efforts were not, like his friend's, crowned with success. His volume of verse, carefully recast and revised, with other poems from his pen and two or three dramas, all, for lack of goodwill on the part of stage-managers and

publishers, remained in obscurity. At last the firm of two, by Dorlange's insistency, took strong measures: by dint of strict economy, the needful sum was saved to print and bring out a volume. The title—*Snowdrops*—was attractive; the binding was pearl-gray, the margins broad, and there was a pretty title-page designed by Dorlange. But the public was as indifferent as the publishers and managers—it would neither buy nor read; so much so, that one day when the rent was due, Marie-Gaston, in a fit of despair, sent for the old-book buyer, and sold him the whole edition for three sous a volume, whence a perfect crop of *Snowdrops* was ere long to be seen on every stall along the quays from the Pont Royal to the Pont Marie.

This wound was still bleeding in the poet's soul when it became necessary for Dorlange to set out for Rome. Life in common was no longer possible. Being informed by the mysterious dwarf that his allowance would be paid to him as usual in Rome, through Torlonia's bank, it occurred to Dorlange to offer Marie-Gaston the fifteen hundred francs a year granted him on the Royal scholarship for the five years while he should remain in Rome. But a heart noble enough to receive a favor is rarer even than that which can bestow one. Marie-Gaston, embittered by constant reverses, had not the necessary courage to meet this sacrifice half-way. The dissolution of partnership too plainly exposed the position of a dependent which he had hitherto accepted. Some trifling work placed in his hands by the great writer Daniel d'Arthez added to his little income would, he said, be enough to live on, and he peremptorily refused what his pride stigmatized as charity.

This misplaced pride led to a coolness between the friends. Their intimacy was kept alive till 1833 by a fairly brisk correspondence, but on Marie-Gaston's part there was a diminution of confidence and freedom. He was evidently hiding something. His haughty determination to be self-sufficing had led to bitter disappointment. His poverty increased day by day; and, prompted by inexorable necessity, he had drifted

into a most painful position. He had tried to release himself from the constant pinch of want, which paralyzed his flight, by staking everything for all or nothing. He imprudently mixed himself up in the concerns of a newspaper, and then, to obtain a ruling voice, took upon himself almost all the expenses of the undertaking. Thus led into debt for a sum of not less than thirty thousand francs, he saw nothing before him but a debtor's prison opening its broad jaws to devour him.

At this juncture he met Louise de Chaulieu. For nine months, the blossoming time of their marriage, Marie-Gaston's letters were few and far between, and those he wrote were high treason to friendship. Dorlange ought to have been the first person told, and he was told nothing. That most high and mighty dame, Louise de Chaulieu, Baronne de Macumer, would have it so. When the day of the marriage arrived, her passion for secrecy had reached a pitch bordering on mania. I, her closest friend, was scarcely allowed to know it, and no one was admitted to the ceremony. To comply with the requirements of the law, witnesses were indispensable; but at the time when Marie-Gaston invited two friends to do him this service, he announced that their relations must be finally but amiably put an end to. His feelings towards everybody but his wife, whom he exalted to a pure abstraction, "would be," he wrote to Daniel d'Arthez, "friendship independent of the friend."

As for Louise, she, I believe, for greater security, would have had the witnesses murdered on leaving the *Mairie,* but for a wholesome fear of the public prosecutor!

Dorlange was still away, a happy excuse for telling him nothing. Buried in a Trappist monastery, Marie-Gaston could not have been more lost to him. By dint of writing to other friends and asking for information, Dorlange at last found out that Marie-Gaston no longer trod this lower earth; that, like Tithonus, he had been translated by a jealous divinity to a rural Olympus, which she had constructed on purpose in the heart of the woods of Ville-d'Avray.

In 1836, when the sculptor came back from Rome, the sequestration of Marie-Gaston was closer and more unrelaxing than ever. Dorlange had too much spirit to steal or force his way into the sanctuary where Louise had sheltered her crazy passion, and Marie-Gaston was too desperately in love to break the spell and escape from Armida's garden. The friends, incredible as it must seem, never met, nor even exchanged notes. Still, on hearing of Madame Marie-Gaston's death, Dorlange forgot every slight and rushed off to Ville-d'Avray to offer what consolation he might. Vain devotion. Within two hours of the melancholy ceremony, Marie-Gaston was in a post-chaise flying south to Italy, with no thought for his friend, or a sister-in-law and two nephews, who were dependent on him. Dorlange thought this selfishness of grief rather too much to be borne; and he eradicated from his heart, as he believed, the last remembrance of a friendship which even the breath of sorrow had not revived.

My husband and I had loved Louise de Chaulieu too sincerely not to retain some feeling of affection for the man who, for three years, had been all in all to her. When leaving, Marie-Gaston had requested M. de l'Estorade to take entire charge of all his business matters, and he sent him a power of attorney to act for him in all particulars.

A few weeks since, his sorrow, still living and acute, suggested an idea to his mind. In the middle of the park at Ville-d'Avray there is a small lake, and in the middle of the lake an island which Louise was very fond of. To this island, a calm and shady retreat, Marie-Gaston wished to transfer his wife's remains, and he wrote us from Carrara to this effect. And then, remembering Dorlange, he begged my husband to call on him and inquire whether he would undertake to execute a monument. Dorlange at first affected not even to remember Marie-Gaston's name, and under a civil pretext refused the commission.

But here comes a startling instance of the strength of old association in an affectionate nature. On the evening of the day when he had shown out M. de l'Estorade, being at the

opera, he overheard the Duc de Rhétoré speak slightingly of his old friend, and took the matter up with eager indignation. Hence a duel, in which he was wounded—and of which the news must certainly have reached you; so here is a man risking his life for an absentee whom he had strenuously denied in the morning.

How all this long story is directly connected with my own absurd adventure is what I would proceed to tell you if my letter were not already interminable. And, indeed, as I have called it the chapter of a novel, this, it will no doubt seem to you, is a favorable place for a break. I have, I flatter myself, excited your interest to such a pitch of curiosity as to have a right to refuse to satisfy it. To be continued, therefore, by the next post.

The Comtesse de l'Estorade to Madame Octave de Camps.

PARIS, *March* 1839.

I derived the main facts of the long biographical notice I sent you, my dear friend, from a recent letter written by M. Marie-Gaston. On hearing of the heroic devotion of which he had been the object, his first impulse was to hasten to Paris and see the friend who had made such a noble return for his faithlessness. Unluckily, the day before he should have started, a painful hindrance interfered. By a singular coincidence, while M. Dorlange was wounded in his behalf in Paris, he himself, visiting Savarezza—one of the finest marble quarries that are worked at Carrara—had a bad fall and sprained his leg. Being obliged to put off his journey, he wrote to M. Dorlange from his bed of suffering to express his gratitude.

By the same mail I also received a voluminous letter: M. Marie-Gaston, after telling me all the past history of their friendship, begged me to call on his old school-fellow and advocate his cause. In point of fact, he could not be satisfied with this convincing proof of the place he still held in M. Dorlange's affections. What he desires is to prove that, in spite of evidence to the contrary, he has never ceased to de-

serve it. This is a matter of some little difficulty, because he would not on any account consent to attribute the blame to the real author of the mischief. This, however, is the whole secret of his conduct to M. Dorlange. His wife was bent on having him entirely to herself, and insisted, with extraordinary perversity, on uprooting every other feeling. But nothing would persuade him to admit this, or the sort of moral mediocrity which such ill-regulated and frenzied jealousy denotes. To him Louise de Chaulieu is absolute perfection; even the most extravagant freaks of her imagination and temper were in his eyes adorable. The utmost he might concede would be that the character and the conduct of his beloved despot must not be weighed in the same scales as those of other women. He regards Louise as a glorious exception to her sex in general, and would allow that on those grounds indeed she may need explaining.

Who then better than I, from whom she had no secrets, could undertake this task? So I was requested to proceed to throw so much light as that on the matter for M. Dorlange's benefit; since if Madame Marie-Gaston's influence was justified and understood, her husband's conduct must be forgiven.

My first idea, to this end, was to write a note to his friend the sculptor and beg him to call on me. But, on second thoughts, he has hardly yet got over his wound, and besides, this kind of convocation with a definite object in view would give an absurd solemnity to my part as go-between. I thought of another plan. Anybody may visit an artist's studio: without any preliminary announcement I could call on M. Dorlange with my husband and Naïs, under pretence of reiterating the request already put to him to give us the benefit of his assistance. And by seeming to bring my feminine influence to bear on this matter, I had a bridge ready made to lead me to the true point of my visit.—Do you not approve?—and doesn't it seem to you that in this way everything was well prepared?

So, on the day after I had come to this happy conclusion, I and my escort, as proposed, found our way to a pleasant little

house in the Rue de l'Ouest, behind the gardens of the Luxembourg, one of the quietest parts of Paris. In the vestibule and passages, fragments of sculpture, bas-reliefs, and inscriptions, nicely arranged against the walls, showed the owner's good taste and betrayed his habitual interests.

We were met on the steps by a woman to whom M. de l'Estorade had already alluded. The Student from Rome, it would seem, could not come away from Italy without bringing some *souvenir*. This beautiful Italian, a sort of middle-class Galatea, sometimes housekeeper and sometimes a model, representing at once the Home and Art, fulfils in M. Dorlange's household—if scandal is to be trusted—the most perfect ideal of the "woman-of-all-work" so constantly advertised in newspapers.

At the same time, I must at once say plainly that there was absolutely nothing whatever in her appearance to lead me to imagine such a strange plurality of offices. She was gravely and rather coldly polite. Her large, velvety black eyes, somewhat tawny complexion, hair done in bands, and arranged in such broad, thick plaits as to show that it must be magnificently luxuriant, her rather large hands, well shaped and of an amber whiteness, that was conspicuous against her black dress; a very simple dress, but fitting so as to do justice to her splendid figure; and then an air of almost untamed pride pervading her whole person—the demeanor by which, as I have heard, you may always know a Roman *Trasteverina:* there you have the portrait of our guide who led us into a gallery crowded with works of art and opening into the studio.

While this handsome housekeeper announced M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse de l'Estorade, M. Dorlange, in a picturesque studio jacket, having his back to us, hastily drew a green baize curtain in front of the statue he was working on.

The instant he turned round, before I had had time to believe my eyes, imagine my astonishment at seeing Naïs rush up to him and almost into his arms, exclaiming with childish glee:

"Oh! you are the gentleman who saved me!"

What—the gentleman who had saved her? Why, then M. Dorlange must be that much-talked-of Unknown.

Yes, madame, and I at once saw, as Naïs did, that it was certainly he.

"Well, but if he is the Unknown, he is also the persecutor?"

Yes, madame; chance, often the most ingenious of romancers, willed that M. Dorlange should be all this; and my last letter, I fancy, must have suggested this to you, if only by the prolixity with which I enlarged on his previous history.

"And you, my dear Countess, rushing thus into his studio——?"

My dear madame, don't speak of it! Startled, trembling, red and white by turns, I must for a moment have looked an image of awkward confusion.

Happily, my husband launched at once into elaborate compliments as a happy and grateful father. I, meanwhile, had time to recover myself; and when it came to my turn to speak, I had composed my features to one of my finest expressions *à l'Estorade*, as you choose to call them; I then, as you know, register twenty-five degrees below zero, and should freeze the words on the lips of the most ardent adorer. I thus hoped to keep my artist friend at a distance, and hinder him if he should hope to make capital out of my stupid visit to his house. M. Dorlange himself seemed surprised rather than disconcerted by the meeting; and then, as if we were insisting on our gratitude too strongly for his modesty, to cut it short and suddenly change the subject, he began:

"Madame," said he, "since we are better acquainted than we had any reason to suppose, may I be permitted to indulge my curiosity——?"

I fancied I felt the cat's claw extended to play with the mouse, so I replied:

"Artists, if I am not mistaken, are sometimes very indiscreetly curious——"

And I emphasized my meaning with a marked severity

which I hoped would give it point. But my man was not abashed.

"I hope that will not prove to be the case with my inquiry," said he. "I only wanted to know if you have a sister?"

"Well done," thought I. "A way out of the difficulty! The game he means to play is to ascribe his persistent persecution to some fancied resemblance."

But though I should very willingly have given him that loophole in M. de l'Estorade's presence, I was not free to tell him a lie.

"No, monsieur," replied I, "I have no sister—at any rate, not to my knowledge."

And I said it with an air of superior cunning so as to make sure of not being taken for a dupe.

"At any rate," said M. Dorlange, "it was not impossible that my idea was a true one. The family, among whom I once met a lady strikingly like you, is involved in an atmosphere of mystery which allows every possible hypothesis."

"And am I indiscreet in asking their name?"

"Not in the least. They are people you may perhaps have known in Paris in 1829-30. They kept house in great style, and entertained magnificently. I met them in Italy."

"But their name?" said I, with a determination that was not prompted, I own, by any charitable motive.

"Lanty," said M. Dorlange, without any hesitation or embarrassment.

There was, in fact, a family of that name in Paris before I came to live here, and you, like me, may remember hearing some strange tales about them.

As he answered the question, the sculptor went up to the veiled statue.

"I have taken the liberty, madame, of giving you the sister you never had," he said, rather abruptly, "and I make so bold as to ask you if you do not yourself discern a family likeness?"

At the same time he pulled away the baize which hid the work, and then, my dear madame, I beheld myself, in the guise of a saint, crowned with glory. How, I ask you, could

I be angry? On seeing the startling likeness that really stared them in the face, my husband and Naïs exclaimed with admiration.

As for M. Dorlange, he proceeded without delay to explain this rather dramatic surprise.

"This statue," said he, "is a Saint Ursula, a commission from a convent in the country. In consequence of circumstances too long to relate, the features of the young lady I mentioned just now remained deeply stamped on my memory. I should have striven vainly to create, by the help of my imagination, any head that would more perfectly have represented my idea. I began, therefore, to model it from memory; but one day, madame, in the Church of St. Thomas d'Aquin, I saw you, and I was so superstitious as to believe that Providence had sent you to me as a duplicate for my benefit. From that time you were the model from which I worked; and as I could not think of asking you to come and sit to me in my studio, I availed myself, as far as possible, of every chance of meeting you. I also took particular care not to know your name or your social position: that would have been to vulgarize you, to bring you down from the ideal. If by any mischance you had happened to notice my persistency in crossing your path, you would have taken me for one of those idlers who hang about in hope of an adventure, and I was nothing worse than a conscientious artist, *prenant son bien où il le trouve,* like Molière, making the most of my chances, and trying to find inspiration in Nature alone, which always gives the best results."

"Oh, I had noticed you following us," said Naïs, with an all-knowing air.

Children! my dear madame—does any one understand them? Naïs had seen all; at the time of her accident it would have been natural that she should say something to her father or to me about this gentleman, whose constant presence had not escaped her notice—and yet, not a word. Brought up as she has been by me with such constant care, and hardly ever out of my sight, I am absolutely certain of her perfect

innocence. Then it must be supposed that Nature alone can give a little girl of thirteen an instinctive knowledge of certain secrets. Is it not terrible to think of?

But husbands! my dear madame, husbands are what are so truly appalling when, at unexpected moments, we find them abandoned to a sort of blind predestination. Mine, for instance, as it seems to me, ought to have pricked up his ears as he heard this gentleman describe how he had dared to take me for his model. M. de l'Estorade is not considered a fool; on all occasions he has a strong sense of the proprieties; and if ever I should give the least cause, I believe him capable of being ridiculously jealous. And yet, seeing his *belle Renée,* as he calls me, embodied in white marble as a saint, threw him, as it seems, into such a state of admiration as altered him out of all knowledge!

He and Naïs were wholly absorbed in verifying the fidelity of the copy; that was quite my attitude, quite my eyes, my mouth, the dimples in my cheeks. In short, I found that I must take upon myself the part which M. de l'Estorade had quite forgotten, so I said very gravely to this audacious artist:

"Does it not occur to you, monsieur, that thus to appropriate without leave—in short, to put it plainly, thus to steal a stranger's features—might strike her, or him, as a rather strange proceeding?"

"Indeed, madame," replied he, very respectfully, "my fraudulent conduct would never have gone beyond the point you yourself might have sanctioned. Though my statue is doomed to be buried in a chapel for nuns, I should not have despatched it without obtaining your permission to leave it as it was. I could, when necessary, have ascertained your address; and while confessing the fascination to which I had succumbed, I should have requested you to come to see the work. Then, when you saw it, if a too exact likeness should have offended you, I would have said what I now say: with a few strokes of the chisel I will undertake to mislead the most practised eye."

Diminish the resemblance! That was no part of the programme! My husband, apparently, did not think it close enough, for at this moment he turned to M. Dorlange to say, with beatific blandness:

"Do not you think, monsieur, that Madame de l'Estorade's nose is just a little thinner?"

Thoroughly upset as I was by these unforeseen incidents, I should, I fear, have pleaded badly for M. Marie-Gaston; however, at my very first allusion to the subject:

"I know," said M. Dorlange, "all you could say in defence of the 'faithless one.' I do not forgive, but I will forget. As things have turned out, I was within an ace of being killed for his sake, and it would be really too illogical to owe him now a grudge on old scores. Still, as regards the monument at Ville-d'Avray, nothing will induce me to undertake it. As I have already explained to M. de l'Estorade, there is an obstacle in the way which grows more definite every day; I also consider it contemptible in Marie-Gaston that he should persist in chewing the cud of his grief, and I have written to him to that effect. He must show himself a man, and seek such consolation as may always be found in study and work."

The object of my visit was at an end, and for the moment I had no hope of penetrating the dark places, on which, however, I must throw some light. As I rose to leave, M. Dorlange said:

"May I hope, then, that you will not insist on any too serious disfigurement of my statue?"

"It is my husband rather than I who must answer that question. We can re-open it on another occasion, for M. de l'Estorade hopes you will do us the honor to return this call."

M. Dorlange bowed respectful acquiescence, and we came away. As he saw us to the carriage, not venturing to offer me his arm, I happened to turn round to call Naïs, who was rashly going up to a Pyrenean dog that lay in the forecourt. I then perceived the handsome housekeeper behind a window-curtain eagerly watching me. Finding herself caught in the act, she dropped the curtain with evident annoyance.

"Well," thought I, "now this woman is jealous of me! Is she afraid, I wonder, that I may become her rival, at least as a model?"

In fact, I came away in a perfectly vile temper. I was furious with Naïs and with my husband. I could have given him the benefit of a scene of which he certainly could have made neither head nor tail.

Now, what do you think of it all? Is this man one of the cleverest rogues alive, who all in a moment, to get himself out of a scrape, could invent the most plausible fiction? Or is he, indeed, an artist and nothing but an artist, who *artlessly* regarded me as the living embodiment of his ideal?—This is what I mean to find out within the next few days; for, more than ever now, I shall carry out my programme, and not later than to-morrow M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse de l'Estorade will have the honor of inviting M. Dorlange to dinner.

The Comtesse de l'Estorade to Madame Octave de Camps.

PARIS, *March* 1839.

DEAR MADAME,—M. Dorlange dined with us yesterday. My own notion had been to receive him *en famille,* so as to have him under my eye and catechise him at my ease. But M. de l'Estorade, to whom I did not communicate my disinterested purpose, pointed out that such an invitation, to meet nobody, might be taken amiss: M. le Comte de l'Estorade, Peer of France, might appear to regard the sculptor Dorlange as having no pretensions to mix with his society.

"We cannot treat him," my husband smilingly added, "as if he were one of our farmers' sons who came to display his sub-lieutenant's épaulette, and whom we should invite quite by himself because we could not send him to the kitchen."

So to meet our principal guest, we asked M. Joseph Bridau the painter; the Chevalier d'Espard, M. and Mme. de la Bastie, and M. de Ronquerolles. When inviting this last gen-

tleman, my husband took care to ask him whether he would object to meeting M. de Rhétoré's adversary—for you know, no doubt, that the Duke chose for his seconds in the duel General de Montriveau and M. de Ronquerolles.

"Far from objecting," he replied, "I am delighted to seize an opportunity of improving my acquaintance with a clever man, whose conduct in the affair in which we were concerned was in all respects admirable."

And when my husband told him of the obligation we owe to M. Dorlange:

"Why, the artist is a hero!" he exclaimed. "If he goes on as he has begun, we shall not be able to reach to his knees."

In his studio, with his throat bare so as to give freedom to his head, which is a little large for his body, and dressed in a most becoming loose Oriental sort of garment, M. Dorlange was certainly better looking than in ordinary evening dress. At the same time, when he is talking with animation, his face lights up, and then his eyes seem to pour out a tide of that magnetic fluid of which I had been conscious at our previous meetings. Mme. de la Bastie was no less struck by it.

I forgot whether I told you of the object of M. Dorlange's ambition: he proposes to come forward as a candidate on the occasion of the next elections. This was his reason for declining the commission offered him by my husband as representing M. Marie-Gaston. This, which M. de l'Estorade and I had supposed to be a mere subterfuge or an empty dream, is, it would seem, a serious scheme. At dinner, being challenged by M. Joseph Bridau as to the reality of his parliamentary pretensions, M. Dorlange asserted and maintained them. As a result, almost all through the dinner, the conversation took an exclusively political turn. I expected to find our artist, if not an absolute novice, at least very moderately conversant with such matters, which hitherto must have lain quite outside his range. Not at all; on men and things, on the past and future history of party strife, he had really

fresh views, evidently not borrowed from the daily cant of newspapers; and he spoke with lucidity, ease, and elegance—so much so, that, when he had left, M. de Ronquerolles and M. de l'Estorade expressed their amazement at the clear and powerful political intelligence that he had revealed to them. The admission is all the more striking because these two gentlemen, both by instinct and position, are staunch Conservatives, while M. Dorlange's proclivities tend very evidently to democratic ideas.

This quite unexpected intellectual superiority in my problematical admirer reassured me considerably. Politics, in fact, are an absorbing and dominating passion which can scarcely allow a second to flourish by its side. Nevertheless, I was bent on studying the situation to the bottom, and after dinner I insidiously drew my gentleman into one of those *tête-à-tête* chats which the mistress of a house can generally arrange. After speaking of M. Marie-Gaston, our friend in common, of my dear Louise's crazy flights, and my own constant but useless attempts to moderate them, after giving him every opportunity and facility for opening the battle, I asked him whether his Saint Ursula was to be sent off soon.

"It is quite ready to start, madame," said he. "But I wait for your permission, your *exeat;* for you to tell me, in short, whether or no I am to alter anything in the face."

"First tell me this," replied I. "Supposing I were to wish for any alteration, would such a change greatly injure the statue?"

"It probably would. However little you clip a bird's wings, it is always checked in its flight."

"One more question. Is your statue most like me or *the other* woman?"

"You, madame, I need hardly say. You are the present; she is the past."

"But to throw over the past in favor of the present is called, as you doubtless are aware, monsieur, by an ugly

name. And you confess to this evil tendency with a frank readiness that is really quite startling."

"It is true that art can be brutal," said M. Dorlange, laughing. "Wherever it may find the raw material of a creation, it rushes on it with frenzy."

"Art," said I, "is a big word, under which a world of things find refuge!—The other day you told me that circumstances, too long to be related, had contributed to stamp on your mind, as a constant presence, the features of which mine are a reflection, and which have left such an impression on your memory. Was not this saying pretty plainly that it was not the sculptor alone who remembered them?"

"Indeed, madame, I had not time to explain myself more fully. And in any case, on seeing you for the first time, would you not have thought it extraordinary if I had assumed a confidential tone?——"

"But now?" said I audaciously.

"Even now, unless under very express encouragement, I should find it hard to persuade myself that anything in my past life could have a special interest for you."

"But why so? Some acquaintances ripen quickly. Your devotion to my Naïs is a long step forward in ours.—Besides," I added with affected giddiness, "I love a story beyond all things."

"Besides the fact that mine has no end, it has, even to me, remained a mystery."

"All the more reason——Between us, perhaps, we may be able to solve it."

M. Dorlange seemed to consider the matter; then, after a short silence, he said:

"It is very true; women are clever in discerning faint traces in facts or feelings where we men can detect none. But this revelation does not involve myself alone, and I must be allowed to beg that it remains absolutely between ourselves. I do not except even M. de l'Estorade; a secret ceases to exist when once it goes beyond the speaker and the recipient."

I really was desperately puzzled as to what was coming.

This last clause suggested the cautious preliminaries of a man about to trespass on another's property. However, I pursued my policy of impudence and encouragement.

"M. de l'Estorade," said I, "is so little accustomed to hear everything from me, that he never saw a single line of my correspondence with Madame Marie-Gaston."

At the same time I made a mental reservation with reference to you, my dear friend; for are you not the keeper of my conscience? And to a confessor one must confess all, if one is to be judiciously advised.

Till now M. Dorlange had been standing in front of the fireplace, while I sat at the corner. He now took a chair close to me, and by way of preamble he said:

"I spoke to you, madame, of the Lanty family——"

At this instant Mme. de la Bastie, as provoking as a shower at a picnic, came up to ask me whether I had seen Nathan's new play? Much I cared for anybody else's comedy when absorbed in this drama, in which it would seem I had played a pretty lively part! However, M. Dorlange was obliged to give up his seat by me, and it was impossible to have him to myself any more that evening.

As you see, nothing has come of all my forwardness and wiliness; no light has dawned on the matter; but in the absence of any advances from M. Dorlange, as I remember his manner, which I carefully studied, I am more and more inclined to believe in his perfect innocence.

Nor, in fact, is there anything in this interrupted tale to suggest that love played the part I had insinuated. There are plenty more ways of stamping a personality on one's memory; and if M. Dorlange did not love the woman of whom I reminded him, what grudge can he have against me who am but a sort of second edition? Nor must we overlook that very handsome housekeeper; for, granting that she is but a habit, adopted for reasons of common sense rather than a passion, the woman must still be, at any rate in some degree, a fence against me. Consequently, dear madame, all the alarms I have dinned into your ears would be ridiculous

indeed; I should somewhat resemble Bélise in *Les Femmes Savantes,* who is haunted by the idea that every one who sees her must fall in love with her.

But I should be only too glad to come to this dull conclusion.

Lover or no, M. Dorlange is a man of high spirit and remarkable powers of mind; if he does not put himself out of court by any foolish aspirations, it will be an honor and a pleasure to place him on our list of friends. The service he did us predestines him to this, and I should really be sorry to seem hard on him. In that case, indeed, Naïs would quarrel with me, for she very naturally thinks everything of her rescuer.

In the evening, when he left:

"Mamma, how well M. Dorlange talks!" said she, with a most amusing air of approval.

Speaking of Naïs, this is the explanation she gives of the reserve that disturbed me so much.

"Well, mamma," said she, "I supposed that you would have seen him too. But after he stopped the horses, as you did not seem to know him, and as he is rather common-looking, I fancied he was a man——"

"A man—what do you mean?"

"Why, yes; the sort of man one takes no notice of. But how glad I was when I found that he was a gentleman! You heard me exclaim, '*Why, you are the gentleman who saved me.*'"

Though her innocence is perfect, there is in this explanation an ugly streak of pride, on which, you may be sure, I delivered a fine lecture. This distinction between the man and the gentleman is atrocious; but, on the whole, was not the child in the right? She only said with guileless crudity what even our democratic notions still allow us to carry out in practice, though they do not allow us to profess it. The famous Revolution of '89, at any rate, went so far as to establish this virtuous hypocrisy on a social footing. But here am I too drifting into politics; and if I carry my criticism

any further, you will be telling me to beware, for that I am already catching it from M. Dorlange.

The Comtesse de l'Estorade to Madame Octave de Camps.

PARIS, *April* 1839.

For nearly a fortnight, my dear madame, we heard no more of M. Dorlange. Not only did he not think proper to come and re-open the confidences so provokingly interrupted by Madame de la Bastie, but he did not seem aware that after dining with anybody, a card, at least, is due within a week.

Yesterday morning we were at breakfast, and I had just made a remark to this effect, without bitterness, and merely by way of conversation, when Lucas, who, as an old servant, is somewhat overbold and familiar, made some one throw open the door of the dining-room as if in triumph; and handing a note first to M. de l'Estorade, he set down in the middle of the table a mysterious object wrapped in tissue paper, which at first suggested a decorative dish of some kind.

"What in the world is that?" I asked Lucas, seeing in his face the announcement of a surprise. And I put out my hand to tear away the paper.

"Oh, madame, be careful!" cried he. "It is breakable."

My husband meanwhile had read the note, which he handed to me, saying, "M. Dorlange's apology."

This is what the artist wrote:—

"Monsieur le Comte, I fancied I could discern that Madame de l'Estorade gave me permission very reluctantly to take advantage of the audacious use I had made of my petty larceny. I have therefore bravely determined to alter my work and at the present moment hardly a likeness is discernible between 'the two sisters.' Still, I could not bear that all I had done should be lost to the world, so I had a cast taken of Saint Ursula's head before altering it, and made a reduced copy, placing it on the shoulders of a charming Countess, who is not yet canonized, thank Heaven!

"The mould was broken after the first copy was taken, and that only copy I have the honor to beg you to accept. This fact, which was only proper, gives the statuette rather more value.—Believe me, etc."

While I was reading, my husband, Lucas, Naïs, and René had been very busy extracting me from my wrappings; and behold, from a saint I had been converted into a lady of fashion, in the shape of a lovely statuette elegantly dressed. I thought that M. de l'Estorade and the two children would go crazy with admiration. The news of this wonder having spread through the house, all the servants—whom we certainly spoil—came in one after another, as if they had been invited, and each in turn exclaimed—"How like madame!" I quote only the leading theme, and do not remember every stupid variation.

I alone remained unaffected by the general enthusiasm. It seemed to me that to be the eternal subject of M. Dorlange's plastic efforts was not an enviably happy lot; and, for the reasons you know, I should have liked far better to be less frequently in his thoughts and under his chisel. As to M. de l'Estorade, after spending an hour in deciding on the place in his study where the great work would look best, he came to say:

"On my way to the Exchequer office I will look in on M. Dorlange. If he is disengaged this evening, I will ask him to dine here. Armand, whom he has not yet seen, will be at home; thus he will see all the family together, and you can express your thanks."

I did not approve of this family dinner; it seemed to me to place M. Dorlange on a footing of intimacy which this fresh civility again warned me might be dangerous. When I raised some little difficulty, M. de l'Estorade remarked:

"Why, my dear, the first time we invited him, you wanted to ask him only, which would have been extremely awkward, and now that it is perfectly suitable, you are making objections!"

To this argument, which placed me entirely in the wrong,

I could make no reply, excepting saying to myself that husbands are sometimes very clumsy.

M. Dorlange consented to join us. He may have found me a little cold in my expressions of gratitude. I even went so far as to say that I should not have asked him to alter the statue, which no doubt made him sorry he had done so, and implied that I did not particularly approve of the present he had sent us.

He also contrived to vex me on another point, on which, as you know, I am never amenable. At dinner, M. de l'Estorade reverted to the subject of the elections, disapproving more than ever of M. Dorlange as a candidate, though no longer thinking it ridiculous; this led to a political discussion. Armand, who is a very serious person, and reads the newspapers, joined in the conversation. Unlike most lads of the present day, he shares his father's opinions, that is to say, he is strongly Conservative—indeed, rather in excess of that wise moderation which is very rare, no doubt, at sixteen. He was thus tempted to contradict M. Dorlange, who, as I have told you, is a bit of a Jacobin. And really it did not appear to me that my little man's arguments were unsound or too virulently expressed.

Without being rude, M. Dorlange seemed to scorn the idea of discussing the matter with the poor boy, and he rather sharply reminded him of his school uniform; so much so, that I saw Armand ready to lose his temper and answer viciously. As he is quite well bred, I had only to give him a look, and he controlled himself; but seeing him turn crimson and shut himself up in total silence, I felt that his pride had been deeply wounded, and thought it ungenerous of M. Dorlange to have crushed him by his superiority. I know that in these days all children want to be of importance too soon, and that it does them no harm to interfere now and then and hinder them from being men of forty. But Armand really has powers of mind and reason beyond his age.

Do you want proof?

Until last year I would never part from him; he went

to the Collège Henri IV. as a day scholar. Well, it was he who, for the benefit of his studies, begged to be placed there as a boarder, since the constant to and fro inevitably interfered with his work; and to be allowed, as a favor, to shut himself up under the ferule of an usher, he exhausted more arguments, and wheedled me with more coaxing, than most boys would have used to obtain the opposite result. Thus the grown-up manner, which in many school-boys is intolerably absurd, in him is the evident result of natural precocity, and this precocity ought to be forgiven him, since it is the gift of God. M. Dorlange, owing to the misfortune of his birth, is less able than most men to enter into the feelings of boys, so, of course, he is deficient in indulgence.—But he had better be careful! This is a bad way of paying his court to me, even on the most ordinary footing of friendship.

Being so small a party, I could not, of course, revert to the history he had to tell me; but I did not think that he was particularly anxious to recur to the subject. In fact, he was less attentive to me than to Naïs, for whom he cut out black paper figures during an hour or more. It must also be said that Madame de Rastignac came in the way, and that I had to give myself up to her visit. While I was talking to her by the fire, M. Dorlange, at the other end of the room, was making Naïs and René stand for their portraits, and they presently came exultant to show me their profiles, wonderfully like, snipped out with the scissors.

"Do you know," said Naïs in a whisper, "M. Dorlange says he will make a bust of me in marble?"

All this struck me as in rather bad taste. I do not like to see artists who, when admitted to a drawing-room, still carry on the business, as it were. They thus justify the aristocratic arrogance which sometimes refuses to think them worthy to be received for their own sake.

M. Dorlange went away early; and M. de l'Estorade got on my nerves, as he has done so many times in his life, when he insisted on showing out his guest, who had tried to steal away unperceived, and I heard him desire him to repeat his visits less rarely, that I was always at home in the evening.

The result of this family dinner has been civil war among the children. Naïs lauding her dear deliverer to the skies, in which she is supported by René, who is completely won over by a splendid lancer on horseback, cut out for him by M. Dorlange. Armand, on the contrary, says he is ugly, which is indisputable; he declares he is just like the portraits of Danton in the illustrated history of the Revolution, and there is some truth in it. He also says that in the statuette he has made me look like a milliner's apprentice, which is not true at all. Hence endless squabbles among the dear creatures. Only just now I was obliged to interfere and tell them that I was tired of hearing of their M. Dorlange.

Will you not say the same of me, dear madame, when I have written so much about him and told you nothing definite after all?

Dorlange to Marie-Gaston.

PARIS, *April* 1839.

Why do I give up my art, and what do I expect to find in that "galley" called politics?

That is what comes, my dear fond lover, of shutting yourself up for years in conventual matrimony. The world, meanwhile, has gone on. Life has brought fresh combinations to those whom you shut out, and the less you know of them, the readier you are to blame those you have forgotten. Every one is clever at patching other folks' affairs.

You must know then, my inquisitive friend, that it was not of my own accord that I took the step for which you would call me to account. My unforeseen appearance in the electoral breach was in obedience to the desire of a very high personage. A father has at last allowed a gleam of light to shine in the eternal darkness; he has three parts revealed himself; and, if I may trust appearances, he fills a place in society that might satisfy the most exacting conceit. And, to be in keeping with the usual current of my life, this revelation was involved in circumstances singular and romantic enough to deserve telling in some detail.

Since for two years past you have been living in Italy and visiting the most interesting cities, I believe I need hardly tell you that the Café *Greco* is the general haunt of the art pupils from the Paris schools, and the artists of every nationality who are staying in Rome.

In Paris, Rue du Coq-Saint-Honoré, there is remote equivalent for this institution in a café that has long been known as the *Café des Arts.* I spend the evening there two or three times a week, and meet there several Roman students, my contemporaries. They have made me acquainted with some journalists and men of letters, agreeable and superior men, with whom it is both pleasant and profitable to exchange ideas. There is a particular corner where we congregate, and where every question of a serious character is discussed and thrashed out; but, as having the most living interests, politics especially give rise to the most impassioned arguments. In our little club democratic views predominate; they are represented in the most diverse shades, including the Utopia or phalanstery of workers. This will show you that the proceedings of the Government are often severely handled, and that unlimited freedom of language characterizes our verdicts.

Rather more than a year ago the waiter—the only waiter who is allowed the honor of supplying our wants—took me aside one day, having, as he declared, a communication of importance to make.

"You are watched by the police, sir," said he, "and you will be wise not to talk always open-mouthed like St. Paul."

"By the police, my good fellow! Why, what on earth can it find to watch? All I can say, and a great deal more, is printed every morning in the newspapers."

"That has nothing to do with it. They have an eye on you. I have seen it. There is a little old man who takes a great deal of snuff, and who always sits where he can hear you. When you are speaking he listens much more attentively than to any of the others, and I even caught him once writing something in his pocket-book in signs that were not the alphabet."

"Very good; the next time he comes, show him to me."

The next time was no further off than the morrow.

The man pointed out was small and gray-haired, untidy in his appearaance, and his face, deeply marked by the small-pox, was, I thought, that of a man of fifty. And he certainly very often took a pinch out of a large snuff-box, and seemed to honor my remarks with a degree of attention which I could, as I chose, regard as highly complimentary or extremely impertinent. But of the two alternatives I was inclined to the more charitable by the air of honesty and mildness that pervaded this supposed emissary of the police. When I remarked on this reassuring aspect to the waiter, who flattered himself that he had scented out a secret agent:

"Oh yes, indeed!" said he. "Those are the sweet manners they always put on to hide their game."

Two days after, one Sunday, at the hour of vespers, in the course of one of those long walks all across Paris, which you know I always loved, mere chance led me into the Church of Saint-Louis en l'Ile, the parish church of that God-forsaken quarter. The building is not particularly interesting, in spite of what some historians have said, and, following them, every *Stranger's Guide to Paris.* I should only have walked through it, but that the wonderful talent of the organist who was playing the service irresistibly held me. When I tell you that the performer came up to my ideal, you will know that is high praise; for you will, I daresay, remember that I draw a distinction between organ players and organists—a rank of the superior nobility to whom I grant the title only on the highest grounds.

When the service was over, I was curious to see the face of so remarkable an artist buried in such a corner. I took my stand at the door from the organ loft to be close to the player as he came out. I could have done no more for a crowned head! But are not great artists, after all, the real kings by divine right? Imagine my amazement when, after waiting a few minutes, instead of a perfectly strange face, I saw a man whom I at once vaguely recognized, and knew at

a second glance for my watchful listener of the *Café des Arts*. Nor was this all: at his heels came a sort of spoilt attempt at humanity; and in this misshapen failure, with crooked legs and a thicket of unkempt hair, I discerned our old quarterly providence, my banker, my money-carrier—in short, our respected friend the mysterious dwarf.

I, you may be sure, did not escape his sharp eye, and I saw him eagerly pointing me out to the organist. He instinctively, and not probably calculating all that would come of it, turned quickly to look at me, and then, taking no further notice of me, went on his way. The dwarf, meanwhile—whom I might recognize as his master's servant by this single detail—went familiarly up to the man who distributed holy water and offered him a pinch of snuff; then he hobbled away, never looking at me again, and vanished through a door in a corner under one of the side aisles.

The care this man had taken to point me out to the organist was a revelation. The *Maestro* was evidently fully informed as to the strange means by which my allowance used to reach me, and it had been regularly handed over to me after my return from Rome, till I was placed above want by receiving some commissions. It was not less probable that the man who knew about this financial mystery was the depositary of other secrets; and I was all the more eager to extract from him some explanation because, as I am now living on the fruit of my own exertions, I had no fear of finding my curiosity punished by the stoppage of supplies that had formerly been threatened.

I acted on the spur of the moment and rushed after the organist. By the time I had got out of the church door, he was out of sight, but chance favored me and led me in the direction he had taken; as I came out on the Quai de Béthune, I saw him in the distance knocking at a door.

I boldly followed and said to the gate porter:

"Is the organist of Saint-Louis en l'Ile within?"

"M. Jacques Bricheteau?"

"Yes, M. Jacques Bricheteau; he lives here, I think?"

"On the fourth floor above the *entresol,* the door on the left. He has just come in; you may catch him up on the stairs."

Run as fast as I could, by the time I reached my man his key was in the lock.

"M. Jacques Bricheteau?" I hastily exclaimed. "I have the honor, I think——?"

"I know no such person," said he coolly, as he turned the key.

"I may be mistaken in the name; but M. the organist of Saint-Louis en l'Ile?"

"I never heard of any organist living in this house."

"I beg your pardon, monsieur: there certainly is, for the concierge has just told me so. Besides, you are undoubtedly the gentleman I saw coming out of the organ loft, accompanied by a man—I may say——"

But before I had finished speaking, this strange individual had balked me of his company and shut his door in my face.

For a moment I wondered whether I had been mistaken; but, on reflection, mistake was impossible. Had not this man already, and for years, proved his extravagant secretiveness? It was he certainly who persistently refused to have anything to say to me, and not I who had blundered. I proceeded to pull his bell with some energy, quite determined to persist till I knew the reason of this fixed purpose of ignoring me. For some little time the besieged party put up with the turmoil I was making; but I suddenly remarked that the bell had ceased to sound. It had evidently been muffled; the obstinate foe would not come to the door, and the only way of getting at him would be to beat it in. That, however, is not thought mannerly.

I went down again to the door-porter and told him of my failure, without saying anything about the reasons that had led to it; and I so far invited his confidence that I extracted some information concerning the impenetrable M. Jacques Bricheteau. But though it was given with all desirable will-

ingness, it threw no light whatever on the situation.—M. Bricheteau was a quiet resident, polite but not communicative; punctual in paying his rent, but not in easy circumstances, for he kept no servant—not even a maid to clean for him, and he never took a meal at home. He was always out by ten in the morning, and never came in till the evening, and was probably a clerk in an office, or perhaps a music master giving lessons.

Only one fact in this heap of vague and useless information seemed to be of the slightest interest. For some months past M. Jacques Bricheteau had pretty frequently been the recipient of heavy letters, which, to judge by the cost of postage, were no doubt from some distant country; but, with the best will in the world, the worthy porter had never been able to decipher the postmark, and at any rate the name, which he had but guessed at, had quite escaped his memory; so for the moment this observation, which might have been of some use, was absolutely valueless.

On my return home I persuaded myself that a pathetic epistle addressed to my recalcitrant friend would induce him to admit me. Seasoning my urgent supplication with a spice of intimidation, I gave him to understand that I was immovably bent on penetrating, at any cost, the mystery of my birth, of which he seemed to be fully informed. Now that I had some clue to the secret, it would be his part to consider whether my desperate efforts, blindly rushing against the dark unknown, might not entail much greater trouble than the frank explanation I begged him to favor me with.

My ultimatum thus formulated, to the end that it should reach the hands of M. Jacques Bricheteau as soon as possible, on the following morning, before nine, I arrived at the door. But, in a frenzy of secrecy—unless he has some really inexplicable reason for avoiding me—at daybreak that morning, after paying the rent for the current term and for a term's notice, the organist had packed off his furniture; and it is to be supposed that the men employed in this sudden flitting were handsomely bribed for their silence, since the concierge

could not discover the name of the street whither his lodger was moving. The men did not belong to the neighborhood, so there was not a chance of unearthing them and paying them to speak. The man, whose curiosity was at least as eager as my own, had, to be sure, thought of a simple plan for gratifying it. This, not indeed a very creditable one, was to follow the van in which the musician's household goods were packed. But the confounded fellow was prepared for everything: he kept an eye on the over-zealous porter, and remained on sentry duty in front of the house till his cargo was too far on its way for any risk of pursuit.

Still, and in spite of the obstinacy and cleverness of this unattainable antagonist, I would not be beaten. I felt there was still a connecting thread between us in the organ of Saint-Louis'; so on the following Sunday, before the end of High Mass, I took up a post at the door of the organ loft, fully determined not to let the sphinx go till I had made it speak.—Here was a fresh disappointment: M. Jacques Bricheteau was represented by one of his pupils, and for three Sundays in succession it was the same. On the fourth I ventured to speak to the substitute and ask him if the *maestro* were ill.

"No, monsieur. M. Bricheteau is taking a holiday; he will be absent for some time, and is away on business."

"Where then can I write to him?"

"I do not exactly know. Still, I suppose that you can write to his lodgings, close at hand, Quai de Béthune."

"But he has moved. Did you not know?"

"No. Indeed! and where is he now living?"

I was out of luck—asking for information from a man who, when I questioned him, questioned me. And as if to drive me fairly beside myself, while investigating matters under such hopeful conditions, I saw in the distance that confounded deaf and dumb dwarf, who positively laughed as he looked at me.

Happily for my impatience and curiosity, which were enhanced by every defeat, and rising by degrees to an almost

intolerable pitch, daylight presently dawned. A few days after this last false scent, a letter reached me; and I, a better scholar than the concierge of the Quai de Béthune, at once saw that the postmark was Stockholm, Sweden, which did not excessively astonish me. When in Rome, I had the honor of being kindly received by Thorwaldsen, the great sculptor, and I had met many of his fellow-countrymen in his studio—some commission perhaps, for which he had recommended me—so imagine my surprise and emotion when, on opening it, the first words I read were:

"Monsieur mon fils."

The letter was long, and I had not patience enough to read it through before looking to see whose name I bore. So I turned at once to the signature. This beginning, *Monsieur mon fils,* which we often find in history as used by kings when addressing their scions, must surely promise aristocratic parentage!—My disappointment was great: there was no signature.

"Monsieur mon fils," my anonymous father wrote, "I cannot regret that your inveterate determination to solve the secret of your birth should have compelled the man who watched over your youth to come here and confer with me as to the steps to which we should be compelled by this dangerous and turbulent curiosity. I have for a long time cherished an idea which has now come to maturity, and it has been far more satisfactorily discussed in speech than it could have been by correspondence.

"Being obliged to leave France almost immediately after your birth, which cost your mother her life, I made a large fortune in a foreign land, and I now fill a high position in the Government of this country. I foresee a time when I may be free to give you my name, and at the same time to secure for you the reversion of the post I hold. But, to rise so high as this, the celebrity which, with my permission, you promise to achieve in Art would not be a sufficient recommendation. I therefore wish you to enter on a political

career; and in that career, under the existing conditions in France, there are not two ways of distinguishing yourself—you must be elected a member of the Chamber. You are not yet, I know, of the required age, and you have not the necessary qualifications. But you will be thirty next year, and that is just long enough to enable you to become a landed proprietor and prove your possession for more than a twelvemonth. On the day after receiving this you may call on the Brothers Mongenod, bankers, Rue de la Victoire; they will pay you a sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs. This you must at once invest in the purchase of a house, and devote any surplus to the support of some newspaper which, in due course, will advocate your election—after another outlay is met which I shall presently explain.

"Your aptitude for politics is vouched for by the friend who has watched over you in your deserted existence, with a zeal and disinterestedness that I can never repay. He has for some time followed you and listened to you, and he is convinced that you would make a creditable appearance in the Chamber. Your opinions—Liberal, and at once moderate and enthusiastic—meet my views, and you have, unconsciously, hitherto played into my hand very successfully.

"I cannot at present reveal to you the place of your probable election. It is being prepared with a deep secrecy and skill which will be successful in proportion as they are wrapped in silence and darkness. However, your success may be, perhaps, partly insured by your carrying out a work which I commend to your notice, advising you to accept its apparent singularity without demur or comment. For the present you must still be a sculptor, and you are to employ the talent of which you have given evidence in the execution of a statue of Saint Ursula.—The subject does not lack poetry or interest; Saint Ursula, virgin and martyr, was, it is generally believed, the daughter of a prince of Great Britain. She was martyred in the fifth century at Cologne, where she had founded a convent of maidens known to popular superstition as the Eleven Thousand Virgins. She was subsequently

taken as the patron saint of the Ursuline Sisters who adopted her name; also of the famous House of the Sorbonne.

"An artist so clever as you are, may, it seems to me, make something of all these facts.

"Without knowing the name of the place you are to represent, it is desirable that you should at once make due profession of your political tendencies and proclaim your intention of standing for election. At the same time, I cannot too earnestly impress on you the need for secrecy as to this communication, and for patience in your present position. Leave my agent in peace, I beg of you, and setting aside a curiosity which, I warn you, will involve you in the greatest disasters, await the slow and quiet development of the splendid future that lies before you. By not choosing to conform to my arrangements, you will deprive yourself of every chance of being initiated into the mystery you are so eager to solve. However, I will not even suppose that you can rebel; I would rather believe in your perfect deference to the wishes of a father who feels that the happiest day of his life will be that when he is at last able to make himself known to you.

"*P.S.*—As your statue is intended for the chapel of an Ursuline convent, it must be in white marble. The height of the figure is to be 1.706 metre, or in other words, five feet three inches. As it will not stand in a niche, it must be equally well finished on all sides. The cost to be defrayed out of the two hundred and fifty thousand francs advised by the present letter."

The present letter left me cold and unsatisfied; it bereft me of a hope I had long cherished—that of some day knowing a mother as kind as yours, of whose adorable sweetness you often told me, my dear friend. This was, after all, no better than twilight in the thick fog of my life; it did not even tell me whether I had been born in wedlock or no. And it also struck me that, as addressed to a man of my age, there was a very imperious and despotic tone in the paternal instructions. Was it not a strange act to turn my life upside down

—just as, at school, we were made to wear our coats inside out as a punishment? My first instinct was to address to myself all the arguments that you or any other friend might have found to deny my political vocation.

However, curiosity took me to the bankers; and on finding at Messrs. Mongenod's, in hard and ready cash, the two hundred and fifty thousand francs promised me, I confess I reasoned differently. It struck me that the determination which began by advancing so large a sum must in fact be serious; since that power knew all, and I knew nothing, it seemed to me unreasonable and inopportune to attempt to struggle. After all, had I any special dislike to the path pointed out to me? No. Political matters have always interested me up to a certain point; and if my attempt to be elected came to nothing, I could come back to my art, not more ridiculous than a hundred other still-born ambitions that see the light under every new administration.

I bought the house, I took shares in the *National,* and I found ample encouragement in my political schemes, as well as the certainty of a keen contest whenever I should reveal the name of the place I meant to stand for—hitherto I have had no difficulty in keeping that secret.

I also executed the "Saint Ursula," and I am now waiting for further instructions, which certainly seem to me to be a long time coming, now that I have loudly proclaimed my ambitions and that the stir of a general election is in the air—a fight to which I am by no means equal. To obey the instructions of paternal caution I need not, I know, ask you to be absolutely secret about all I confide to you. Reserve is a virtue which I know you to have brought to such perfection that I need not preach it to you. But I am wrong, my dear friend, to allow myself any such malicious allusions to the past, for at this moment I am under greater obligations to you than you fancy. Partly out of interest in me, no doubt, and to a great extent out of a very general aversion for your brother-in-law's arrogance, when I was wounded, the democratic party came in a body to inquire for me, and the talk

about this duel, which has really helped to make me famous, has no doubt greatly improved my chances of election. So a truce to your perpetual thanks—do you not see that I have to thank you?

Dorlange to Marie-Gaston.

PARIS, *April* 1839.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I am still playing my part as best I may of a candidate without a constituency. My friends are puzzled, and I must confess that I am worried, for there are but a few weeks now till the general election; and if all these mysterious preparations end in smoke, a pretty figure I shall cut in the eyes of M. Bixiou, whose spiteful comments you reported to me not long ago. Still, one thought supports me: It seems hardly likely that anybody should sow two hundred and fifty thousand francs in my furrow without the definite purpose of gathering some sort of crop. Possibly, indeed, if I could see the thing more clearly, this absence of hurry on the part of those who are working for me in such a deliberate and underground manner may, in fact, be the result of perfect confidence in my success. Be this as it may, I am being kept, in consequence, in a state of idle expectancy that is a burden to me; riding a-straddle, as it were, on two lives, one on which I have as yet no foothold, and one from which I am not yet quite free; I have not the spirit to start on any new work, and feel uncommonly like a traveler who has come much too early for his coach and does not know what to do with himself or where to pass the spare time.

You will not, I believe, be sorry that I should turn this *far niente* to account in favor of our correspondence; and, now I think of it, I will recur to two passages in your last letter to which at first I was not inclined to pay any particular attention. For one thing, you warned me that my political pretentions found no favor with M. Bixiou; and for another, you insinuated that I might find myself falling in love with Mme. de l'Estorade, if I had not done so already. First as to the Great Disapprobation of M. Bixiou—we used to say the Great Treason of M. de Mirabeau.

In one word I will paint the man—M. Bixiou is envious. There was in him unquestionably the making of a great artist; but in the economy of his individuality the stomach has killed the heart and head, and by sheer subjection to sensuous appetite he is now for ever doomed to remain no more than a caricaturist, a man, that is to say, who lives from hand to mouth, discounts his talent in frittered work, real penal servitude which enables the man to live jovially, but brings him no consideration, and promises him no future; a man whose talent is a mere feeble abortion; his mind as much as his face is stamped with the perpetual, hopeless grimace which human instinct has always ascribed to the fallen angels. And just as the Prince of Darkness attacks by preference the greatest saints, as reminding him most sternly of the angelic heights from which he fell, so M. Bixiou sheds his venom on every talent and every character in whose strength, and spirit, and purpose he feels the brave resolve not to waste itself as his has been wasted. But there is one thing which may reassure you as to the outcome of his slander and his abuse—for from M. de l'Estorade's report to you I perceive that he indulges in both: namely, at the very time when he fancies he is most successfully occupied in a sort of burlesque autopsy of my person, he is but a plastic puppet in my hands, a jumping-jack of which I hold the string, and into whose mouth I can put what words I please.

Feeling sure that a little advertisement should prepare the way for my appearance as a statesman, I looked about me for some public criers, deep-mouthed, as Mme. Pernelle would say, and well able to give tongue. If among blatant trumpeters I could have found one more shrill, more deafeningly persistent than the great Bixiou, I would have preferred him. I took advantage of the malignant inquisitiveness that takes that amiable pest into every studio in turn, to fill himself up with information. I told him everything, of my good luck, of the two hundred and fifty thousand francs, ascribing them to a lucky turn on 'Change, of all my parliamentary schemes, to the very number of the house I had purchased. And I am

much mistaken if that number is not written down somewhere in his notebook.

This, I fancy, is enough to reduce the admiration of his audience at the Montcornets', and prove that this formidable magpie is not quite so miraculously informed on all points.

As to my political horoscope, which he condescended to cast, I cannot say that his astrology, strictly speaking, is far from the truth. It is quite certain that by announcing my intention of never attempting to keep step with other men's opinions I shall attain to the position so clearly set forth by a pleader worthy to be the successor of M. de la Palisse: "What do you do, gentlemen, to a man whom you place in solitary confinement? You isolate him." Isolation, in fact, must at first be my lot; and the life of an artist, a solitary life, in which a man spins everything out of himself, has predisposed me to accept the situation. And if I find myself in consequence—especially as a beginner—exempt from all lobby and backstairs influences, this may do me good service as a speaker; for I shall be able to express myself with unbiased strength and freedom. Never being bound by any pledge, by any trumpery party interest, there will be nothing to hinder me from being myself, or from expressing in their sacred crudity any ideas I think wholesome and true.

I know full well that in the face of an assembled multitude these poor truths for truth's sake do not always get their chance of becoming infectious, or even of being respectfully welcomed. But have you not observed that by knowing how to snatch an opportunity we sometimes hit on a day which seems to be a sort of festival of sense and intelligence, when the right thing triumphs almost without an effort? On those days, in spite of the utmost prejudice in the hearers, the speaker's honesty makes them generous and sympathetic, at any rate for the moment, with all that is upright, true, and magnanimous. At the same time, I do not deceive myself; though this system of mine may win me some consideration and notoriety as an orator, it is of very little avail in the pursuit of office, nor will it gain me the reputation as a practical

man for which it is now the fashion to sacrifice so much. But if my influence at arm's length should be inconsiderable, I shall be heard at a distance, because I shall, for the most part, speak out of the window—outside the narrow and suffocating atmosphere of parliamentary life, and over the head of its petty passions and mean interests.

This kind of success will be all I need for the purposes my benevolent parent seems to have in view. What he appears to aim at is that I should make a noise and be heard afar; and from that side, political life has, I declare, its artistic aspect which will not too monstrously jar with my past life.

Now, to come to another matter—that of my actual or possible passion for Mme. de l'Estorade. This is your very judicial epitome of the case:—In 1837, when you set out for Italy, Mme. de l'Estorade was still in the bloom of her beauty. Leading a life so calm, so sheltered from passion as hers has always been, it is probable that the lapse of two years has left no deep marks on her; and the proof that time has stood still for that privileged beauty you find in my strange and audacious persistency in deriving inspiration from it. Hence, if the mischief is not already done, at any rate you will give me warning; there is but one step from the artist's admiration to the man's, and the story of Pygmalion is commended to my prudent meditation.

In the first place, most sapient and learned mythologist, I may make this observation: The person principally interested in the matter, who is on the spot and in a far better position than you to estimate the perils of the situation, has no anxiety on the subject. M. de l'Estorade's only complaint is that my visits are not more frequent, and my reticence is, in his eyes, pure bad manners.—"To be sure!" you exclaim, "a husband—any husband—is the last to suspect that his wife is being made love to!"—So be it. But what about Mme. de l'Estorade, with her high reputation for virtue, and the cold, almost calculating reasonableness which she so often brought to bear on the ardent and impassioned petulance of another lady known to you? And will you not also allow that the

love of her children, carried to the last degree of fervor, I had almost said fanaticism, that we see in women, must in her be an infallible protection? So far, and for her, well and good.

But it is not her peace of mind, but mine, that concerns your friendship; for if Pygmalion had failed to animate his statue, much good his love would have done him! I might, in reply to your charitable solicitude, refer you to my principles—though the word and the thing alike are completely out of fashion—to a certain very absurd respect that I have always professed for conjugal fidelity, to the very natural obstacle to all such levity of fancy raised in my mind by the serious responsibilities on which I am embarking. And I might also say that, though not indeed by the superiority of my genius, at least by every tendency of mind and character, I am one of that earnest and serious school of a past time who, regarding Art as long, and Life as short—*Ars longa et vita brevis*—did not waste their time and their creative powers in silly, dull intrigues.

But I can do better still. Since M. de l'Estorade has spared you no detail of the really romantic circumstances under which his wife and I met, you know that it was a reminiscence which made me follow the steps of such a beautiful model. Well, that memory, while it attracted me in one sense to the fair Countess, is the very thing of all others to keep me at a distance. This, of course, seems to you very elaborate and enigmatical. But, patience—and I will explain. If you had not thought proper to cut the thread which for so many years connected our lives, I should not at this day have so much to work over again; since, however, you have made it necessary that I should pay up arrears, you must, my dear fellow, make the best of my long stories, and be a patient listener.

In 1835, the last year I spent in Rome, I was on terms of considerable intimacy with a French Academy student named Desroziers. He was a musician, a man of distinguished and observant mind, who would probably have made a mark in his art if he had not been carried off by typhoid fever the year after I left.

One day when we had taken it into our heads that we would travel as far as Sicily, an excursion allowed by the rules of the Academy, we found ourselves absolutely penniless, and we were wandering about the streets of Rome considering by what means we could repair the damage to our finances, when we happened to pass by the Braschi palace. The doors stood wide open, admitting an ebb and flow of people of all classes in an endless tide.

"By the Mass!" cried Desroziers, "this is the very thing for us!"

And without any explanation as to whither he was leading me, we followed in the stream and made our way into the palace.

After going up a magnificent marble staircase, and through a long suite of rooms, poorly enough furnished—as is usual in Roman palaces, where all the luxury consists in fine ceilings, pictures, statues, and other works of art—we found ourselves in a room hung with black and lighted with many tapers. It was, as you will have understood, a body lying in state. In the middle, on a raised bed covered with a canopy, lay the most hideous and grotesque *thing* you can conceive of. Imagine a little old man, with a face and hands withered to such a state of desiccation that a mummy by comparison would seem fat and well-looking. Dressed in black satin breeches, a violet velvet coat of fashionable cut, a white waistcoat embroidered with gold, and a full shirt frill of English point lace, this skeleton's cheeks were thickly coated with rouge, which enhanced the parchment yellow of the rest of the skin; and crowning a fair wig, tightly curled, it had a huge hat and feathers tilted knowingly over one ear, and making the most reverent spectator laugh in spite of himself. After glancing at this ridiculous and pitiable exhibition, the indispensable preliminary to a funeral according to the aristocratic etiquette of Rome:

"There you see the end," said Desroziers. "Now, come and look at the beginning."

So saying, and paying no heed to my questions, because he

wanted to give me a dramatic surprise, he led me off to the Albani gallery, and placing me in front of a statue of Adonis reclining on a lion's skin:

"What do you think of that?" said he.

"That!" cried I at a first glance; "it is as fine as an antique."

"It is as much an antique as I am," replied Desroziers, and he pointed to a signature on the plinth: "*Sarrasine,* 1758."

"Antique or modern, it is a masterpiece," I said, when I had studied this delightful work from all sides. "But how are this fine statue and the terrible caricature you took me to see just now to help us on our way to Sicily?"

"In your place, I should have begun by asking who and what was Sarrasine."

"That was unnecessary," replied I. "I had already heard of this statue. I had forgotten it again, because when I came to see it the Albani gallery was closed for repairs—as they say of the theatres. Sarrasine, I was informed, was a pupil of Bouchardon's, and, like us, a pensioner on the King of Rome, where he died within six months of his arrival."

"But who or what caused his death?"

"Some illness probably," replied I, never dreaming that my reply was prophetic of the end of the man I was addressing.

"Not a bit of it," said Desroziers. "Artists don't die in such an idiotic way."

And he gave me the following details.

Sarrasine, a youth of genius, but of ungovernable passions, almost as soon as he arrived in Rome, fell madly in love with the principal soprano at the *Argentina,* whose name was Zambinella. At that time the Pope would not allow women to appear on the stage in Rome. The difficulty was overcome by means well known, and imported from the East. Sarrasine, in his fury at finding his love thus cheated, having already executed an imaginary statue of this imaginary mistress, was on the point of killing himself. But the singer was under the protection of a great personage, who, to be be-

forehand with him, had cooled the sculptor's blood by a few pricks of the stiletto. Zambinella had not approved of this violence, but nevertheless continued to sing at the *Argentina* and on every stage in Europe, amassing a splendid fortune.

When too old to remain on the stage, the singer shrank into a little old man, very vain, very shy, but as wilful and capricious as a woman. All the affection of which he was capable he bestowed on a wonderfully beautiful niece, whom he placed at the head of his household. She was the Madame Denis of this strange Voltaire, and he intended that she should inherit his vast wealth. The handsome heiress, in love with a Frenchman named the Comte de Lanty, who was supposed to be a highly skilled chemist, though, in fact, little was known of his antecedents, had great difficulty in obtaining her uncle's consent to her marriage with the man of her choice. And when, weary of disputing the matter, he gave in, it was on condition of not parting from his niece. The better to secure the fulfilment of the bargain, he gave her nothing on her marriage, parting with none of his fortune, which he spent liberally on all who were about him.

Bored wherever he found himself, and driven by a perpetual longing for change, the fantastic old man had at different times taken up his abode in the remotest parts of the world, always dragging at his heels the family party whose respect and attachment he had secured at least for life.

In 1829, when he was nearly a hundred years old, and had sunk into a sort of imbecility—though still keenly alive when he listened to music—a question of some interest to the Lantys and their two children brought them to settle in a splendid house in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. They there received all Paris. The world was attracted by the still splendid beauty of Madame de Lanty, the innocent charm of her daughter Marianina, the really royal magnificence of their entertainments, and a peculiar flavor of mystery in the atmosphere about these remarkable strangers. With regard to the old man particularly, comments were endless; he was

the object of so much care and consideration, but at the same time so like a petted captive, stealing out like a spectre into the midst of the parties, from which such obvious efforts were made to keep him away, while he seemed to find malicious enjoyment in scaring the company, like an apparition.

The gunshots of July 1830 put this phantom to flight. On leaving Paris, to the great annoyance of the Lantys, he insisted on returning to Rome, his native city, where his presence had revived the humiliating memories of the past. But Rome was his last earthly stage; he had just died there, and it was he whom we had seen so absurdly dressed out and lying in state in the Braschi palace—he also on whom we now looked, in all his youthful beauty, in the Albani collection.

These details, given me by Desroziers, were no doubt curious, and a more dramatic contrast was, in truth, inconceivable; still, how would it help us visit Sicily? That was the question.

"You have skill enough to make a copy of this statue, I suppose?" said Desroziers.

"At any rate, I like to think so."

"Well, I am sure of it. Get leave from the curator, and set to work forthwith. I know of a purchaser for such a copy."

"Why, who will buy it?"

"The Comte de Lanty, to be sure. I am giving his daughter lessons in harmony; and when I mention in his house that I know of a fine copy of this Adonis, they will never rest till it belongs to them."

"But does not this savor somewhat of extortion?"

"Not in the least. Some time since the Lantys had a painting done of it by Vien, as they could not purchase the marble; the Albani gallery would not part with it at any price. Various attempts have been made at reproducing it in sculpture, but all have failed. You have only to succeed, and you will be paid enough for forty trips to Sicily, for you will have gratified a whim which has become hopeless, and which, when the price is paid, will still think itself your debtor."

Two days later I had begun the work; and as it was quite to my mind, I went on so steadily that, three weeks later, the Lanty family, all in deep mourning, invaded my studio, under Desroziers' guidance, to inspect a sketch in a forward stage of completion. M. de Lanty seemed to know what he was about, and he declared himself satisfied. Marianina, who, as her grand-uncle's favorite, had been especially benefited under his will, seemed delighted with what I had done.

Marianina was at that time one-and-twenty. I need not describe her, since you know Mme. de l'Estorade, whom she strikingly resembles. This charming girl, already an accomplished musician, had a remarkable talent for every form of art. Coming from time to time to my studio to follow the progress of my work—which, after all, was never finished, as it happened—she, like Princess Marguerite d'Orleans, took a fancy for sculpture, and until the family left Rome—some months before I had come away—Mlle. de Lanty came to me for lessons. Nothing could be further from my thoughts than any idea of playing the part of Abélard or Saint-Preux, but I may say I was most happy in my teaching. My pupil was so intelligent, and so apt to profit by the slightest hint; she had at once such a bright temper and such ripe judgment; her voice, when she sang, went so straight to the heart; and I heard so constantly from the servants, who adored her, of her noble, generous, and charitable actions, that, but for my knowing of her vast fortune, which kept me at a distance, I might have run into the danger you are warning me to avoid now.

Marianina on her part found my teaching luminous. I was ere long received in the house on a somewhat familiar footing, and I could easily see that my beautiful pupil took some pleasure in my conversation. When the question arose of the whole family returning to live in Paris, she suddenly discovered that Rome was a delightful residence, and expressed real regret at leaving; nay, Heaven forgive me if, when we parted, there was not the glitter of a tear in her eye.

On my return to Paris, my first visit was to the Hôtel Lanty.

Marianina was too well bred, and too sweet by nature, ever to make herself disagreeable or to be scornful; but I at once perceived that a singularly cold reserve had taken the place of the gracious and friendly freedom of her manner. It struck me as probable that the liking she had shown me—not, indeed, for my person, but for my mind and conversation—had been commented on by her family. She had no doubt been lectured, and she seemed to me to be acting under strict orders, as I could easily conclude from the distant and repellant manner of M. and Mme. de Lanty.

A few months later, at the Salon of 1837, I fancied I saw a corroboration of my suspicions. I had exhibited a statue which made some sensation; there was always a mob round my Pandora. Mingling with the crowd I used to stand *incognito,* to enjoy my success and gather my laurels fresh. One Friday, the fashionable day, I saw from afar the approach of the Lanty family. The mother was on the arm of a well-known "buck," Comte Maxime de Trailles; Marianina was with her brother; M. de Lanty, who looked anxious, as usual, was alone; and, like the man in the song of Malbrouck, *"ne portait rien,"* carried nothing. By a crafty manœuvre, while the party were pushing their way through the crowd, I slipped behind them so as to hear what they thought, without being seen. *Nil admirari*—think nothing fine—is the natural instinct of every man of fashion; so, after a summary inspection of my work, M. de Trailles began to discover the most atrocious faults, and his verdict was pronounced in a loud and distinct voice, so that his dictum could not be lost on anybody for some little distance round. Marianina, thinking differently, listened to this profound critic with a shrug or two of her shoulders; then when he ceased:

"How fortunate it is!" said she, "that you should have come with us! But for your enlightened judgment I should have been quite capable, like the good-natured vulgar, of thinking this statue beautiful. It is really a pity that the sculptor should not be here to learn his business from you."

"But that is just where he is, as it happens, behind you,"

said a stout woman, with a loud shout of laughter—an old woman who kept carriages for hire, and to whom I had just nodded as the owner of the house in which I have my studio.

Instinct was prompter than reflection; Marianina involuntarily turned round. On seeing me, a faint blush colored her face. I hastily made my escape.

A girl who could so frankly take my part, and then betray so much confusion at being discovered in her advocacy, would certainly not be displeased to see me; and though at my first visit I had been so coldly received, having now been made Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, in recognition of my exhibited work, I determined to try again. The distinction conferred on me might possibly gain me a better reception from the haughty Comte de Lanty.

I was admitted by an old servant for whom Marianina had great regard.

"Ah, monsieur," said he, "terrible things have been happening here!"

"Why—what?" cried I anxiously.

"I will take in your name, sir," was his only reply.

A minute later I was shown into M. de Lanty's study.

The man received me without rising, and greeted me with these words:

"I admire your courage, monsieur, in showing yourself in this house!"

"But I have not been treated here, as yet, in a way that should make me need any great courage."

"You have come, no doubt," M. de Lanty went on, "to fetch the object you so clumsily allowed to fall into our hands. I will return you that elegant affair."

He rose and took out of his writing-table drawer a dainty little pocket-book, which he handed to me.

As I looked at it in blank amazement:

"Oh, the letters, to be sure, are not there," he said. "I supposed that you would allow me to keep them."

"This pocket-book—letters?—The whole thing is a riddle to me, monsieur."

At this moment Mme. de Lanty came in.

"What do you want?" asked her husband roughly.

"I heard that M. Dorlange was here," said she, "and I fancied that there might be some unpleasant passages between you and him. I thought it my duty, as a wife, to interpose."

"Your presence, madame," said I, "is not needed to impose perfect moderation on me; the whole thing is the result of some misunderstanding."

"Oh, this is really too much!" cried M. de Lanty, going again to the drawer from which he had taken the pocket-book. And rudely pushing into my hands a little packet of letters tied up with pink ribbon, he went on: "Now, I imagine the misunderstanding will be cleared up."

I looked at the letters; they had not been through the post, and were all addressed *"A Monsieur Dorlange,"* in a woman's writing perfectly unknown to me.

"Indeed, monsieur," said I coldly, "you are better informed than I am. You have in your possession letters which seem to belong to me, but which have never reached me."

"On my word!" cried M. de Lanty, "it must be confessed that you are an admirable actor. I never saw innocence and amazement more successfully assumed."

But, while he was speaking, Mme. de Lanty had cleverly contrived to place herself behind her husband; and by a perfectly intelligible pantomime of entreaty, she besought me to accept the situation I was so strenuously denying. My honor was too deeply implicated, and I really saw too little of what I might be doing, to feel inclined to surrender at once. So, with the hope of feeling my way a little, I said:

"But, monsieur, from whom are these letters? Who addressed them to me?"

"From whom are the letters?" exclaimed M. de Lanty, in a tone in which irony was merged in indignation.

"Denial is useless, monsieur," Madame de Lanty put in. "Marianina has confessed everything."

"Mademoiselle Marianina wrote those letters—to me?" replied I. "Then there is a simple issue to the matter; con-

front her with me. From her lips I will accept the most improbable statements as true."

"The trick is gallant enough," retorted M. de Lanty. "But Marianina is no longer here; she is in a convent, sheltered for ever from your audacity and from the temptations of her ridiculous passion. If this is what you came to learn, now you know it.—That is enough, for I will not deny that my patience and moderation have limits, if your impudence knows none."

"Monsieur!" cried I, in great excitement.

But when I saw that Mme. de Lanty was ready to drop on her knees to entreat me, it struck me that perhaps Marianina's future fate might depend on my conduct now. Besides, M. de Lanty was slight and frail, he was near sixty years of age, and seemed thoroughly convinced of this imaginary outrage; so I said no more in reply to his insulting speech, and left without any further words.

I hoped that I might find the old servant who had given me warning of this scene, on my way as I went out, and obtain some explanation from him; but I did not see him, and was left, with no light whatever, to an indefinite variety of suppositions.

I was but just up next morning when I was told that M. l'Abbé Fontanon wished to see me. I desired that he should be shown in, and presently found myself face to face with a tall old man, of a bilious complexion, and a gloomy, stern expression, who, conscious perhaps of his forbidding appearance, tried to remedy it by the refinement of excessive politeness and an affectation of honeyed but frigid servility.

As soon as he was seated, he began:

"Monsieur, Mme. la Comtesse de Lanty does me the honor of accepting me as the keeper of her conscience. From her I have heard of a scene that took place yesterday between you and her husband. Prudence would not at the time allow of her giving some explanations to which you have an undoubted right, and I have undertaken to communicate them to you;—that is the reason of my presence here."

"I am listening, sir," was all I replied.

"Some weeks ago," the priest went on, "M. de Lanty purchased an estate in the neighborhood of Paris, and took advantage of the fine weather to go thither with his family. M. de Lanty sleeps badly; one night when he was lying awake in the dark, he fancied he heard footsteps below his window, which he at once opened, calling out, 'Who's there?' in emphatic tones, to the nocturnal visitor he suspected. Nor was he mistaken, there was somebody there—somebody who made no answer, but took to his heels, two pistol shots fired by M. de Lanty having no effect. At first it was supposed that the stranger was bent on robbery; this, however, did not seem likely; the house was not furnished, the owners had only the most necessary things for a short stay; thieves, consequently, who generally are well informed, could not expect to find anything of value; and besides, some information reached M. de Lanty which gave his suspicions another direction.—He was told that, two days after his arrival, a fine young man had taken a bedroom in an inn at the neighboring village; that this gentleman seemed anxious to keep out of sight, and had several times gone out at night; so not a robber evidently—but a lover."

"I have never met with a romancer, M. le Abbé," said I, "who told his story in better style."

By this not very complimentary insinuation, I hoped to induce the speaker to abridge his story; for, as you may suppose, I wanted to hear the end.

"My romance is, unfortunately, painful fact," replied he. "You will see.—M. de Lanty had for some time been watching his daughter, whose vehement passions must, he feared, ere long result in an explosion. You, yourself, monsieur, had in Rome given him some uneasiness——"

"Quite gratuitous, M. le Abbé," I put in.

"Yes. I know that in all your acquaintance with Mlle. de Lanty your behavior has been perfectly correct. And, indeed, their leaving Rome put an end to this first ground for uneasiness; but in Paris another figure seemed to fill her

young mind, and day after day M. de Lanty proposed coming to some explanation with his daughter. The man who seems to have captured her is audacious, enterprising, quite capable of running serious risks if he could but compromise an heiress. But on being questioned as to whether by any levity of manner she had encouraged or given cause for the daring invasion of which they were seeking the perpetrator, Mlle. de Lanty's manner showed her to be quite above suspicion."

"I could have sworn to it!" cried I.

"Wait a moment," said the Abbé. "A maid was then accused, and desired to leave the house at once. This woman's father is a violent-tempered man, and if she returned home charged with anything so disgraceful, she would meet with ruthless severity of treatment. Mlle. de Lanty—that much justice I must do her—had a Christian impulse; she could not allow an innocent person to be punished in her stead; she threw herself at her father's feet, and confessed that the nocturnal visit had been for her; and though she had not authorized it, she was not altogether surprised.

"M. de Lanty at once named the supposed culprit; but she would not admit that he had guessed rightly, though she refused to mention any other name instead. The whole day was spent in altercation; M. de Lanty at last gave up the struggle, desiring his wife to try what she could do where he had failed. He thought, and with reason, that there might be more freedom and candor between the mother and daughter.

"In point of fact, alone with Mme. de Lanty, Marianina at length confessed that her father's suspicions were correct. At the same time, she gave a reason for her obstinate reserve, which certainly deserved consideration. The man whose audacity she had encouraged had fought and won in several duels. By birth he is the equal of M. de Lanty and his son; he moves in the same society, and consequently they frequently meet. Hence the greatest disasters might ensue. How could the father or brother endure the man's presence without demanding satisfaction for conduct so insulting to the honor of the family?—What then was to be done? It was the imprudent

girl herself who suggested the idea of giving a name which, while justifying M. de Lanty's fury, would not cry to him for vengeance."

"I understand," I interrupted. "The name of a man of no birth, a person of no consequence, an artist perhaps, a sculptor, or some such low fellow——"

"I think, monsieur," said the Abbé, "that you are ascribing to Mademoiselle de Lanty a feeling to which she is quite a stranger. In my opinion her love of the arts is only too strongly pronounced, and that perhaps is what has led to this unfortunate laxity of imagination. The thing that made her take refuge in the use of your name from the risks she foresaw was her recollection of the suspicions M. de Lanty had already expressed; she thought of you as the most likely seeming accomplice, and I am sure I may say that she saw nothing beyond."

"And then, M. l'Abbé, what about the pocket-book—the letters—which played so strange a part in yesterday's scene?"

"That again was a device of Marianina's; and though, as it has turned out, the strange inventiveness of her wit has had a good result, it was this in her character which, if she had remained in the world, would have given cause for uneasiness. When once she and Mme. de Lanty had agreed that you were to be the night-prowler, the statement had to be supported by evidence to favor its success. Instead of words, this terrible young lady determined to act in that sense. She spent the night in writing the letters you saw. She used different kinds of paper, ink of which she altered the tone, and she carefully varied the writing; she forgot nothing. Having written them, she placed them in a pocket-book her father had never seen; and then, after having made a hunting dog smell it all over—a dog noted for its intelligence and allowed in the house—she threw the whole thing into a clump of shrubs in the park, and came back to endure her father's angry cross-examination.

"The same sharp contest had begun once more when the dog came in carrying the pocket-book to his young mistress. She acted agonized alarm; M. de Lanty pounced on the ob-

ject, and to him everything was clear—he was deluded as had been intended."

"And all these details," said I, with no great air of credulity, "were reported to you by Mme. de Lanty?"

"Confided to me, monsieur, and you yourself had proof yesterday of their exactitude. Your refusal to recognize the situation might have undone everything, and that was why Mme. de Lanty interposed. She desires me to thank you for your connivance—passive connivance at any rate—in this pious fraud. She thought she could do no less than show her gratitude by putting you in possession of her secret and trusting to your silence."

"And Mademoiselle Marianina?" I asked.

"As M. de Lanty told you, she was immediately sent away to a convent in Italy. To avoid any scandal, she is said to have had a sudden call to the religious life. Her future prospects will depend on the attitude she chooses to assume."

Even if my self-respect had not been so aggrieved by this story—if it were true—I should have felt some doubts, for does it not strike you as rather too romantic? However, an explanation has since offered itself, which may afford a clue to the facts. Not long ago Marianina's brother married into the family of a German Grand-Duke. The Lantys must have had to sacrifice immense sums to achieve such an alliance. May not Marianina have paid the expenses of this royal alliance, since she, by her grand-uncle's will, had the bulk of his fortune, and was disinherited by taking the veil? Or again, may she not have really felt for me the affection expressed in her letters, and have been childish enough to write them, though she would not go so far as to send them? Some mischance may have led to their discovery, and then to punish her—not for having written, but for having thought so—she was shut up in a convent; and to disgust me with her, this got-up story of another lover was invented for my benefit, in which I am made to play the part of lightning-conductor.

I can believe anything of these Lantys. The head of the family has always seemed to me a very deep and crafty char-

acter, capable at a pinch of the blackest designs; and then, if you remember that these people have all their lives slept, as it were, on the secret knowledge of a fortune so ignobly earned, is it not conceivable that they should be ripe for any kind of intrigues, or can you imagine them dainty in their choice of means to an end?

And I may add that the official intervention of the Abbé Fontanon justifies the worst imputations. I have made inquiries about him; he is one of those mischief-making priests who are always eager to have a finger in private family affairs; and it was he who helped to upset the home of M. de Granville, Attorney-General in Paris under the Restoration.

Whatever may be true or false in all my hypotheses, I have no means of knowing, and am not likely to learn, at any rate for a long time to come. But, as you may suppose, the thought of Marianina, like a vision floating above this chaos, is to me a spot of light which, in spite of myself, attracts my gaze. May I love her? Must I hate and despise her?—This is the question I ask myself daily; and under the shroud of such uncertainty the memory of a woman is, it seems to me, more likely to become permanent than to fade.

And is it not a really diabolical coincidence that my chisel should be called upon to execute a pale daughter of the cloister? Under these circumstances was not my imagination inevitably memory; could I invent any image but that which possesses my soul and is so deeply graven on my brain? And behold! a second Marianina rises up before me in the flesh; and when, for the better furtherance of the work, the artist takes advantage of this stroke of fortune, he must be supposed, forsooth, to have transferred his affections. Could that frigid Mme. de l'Estorade ever fill the place of my enchanting pupil with the added charm and halo of forbidden fruit and of mystery? In short, you must give up all your imaginings.

The other day I was within an ace of relating the whole romance of Mademoiselle de Lanty to her supposed rival. And if I really aspired to this woman's favor—but she can love no one but her children—a pretty way of courting her

it would be, I may say, to tell her that little tale. And so, to return to our starting-point, I care no more for M. Bixiou's opinion than for last year's roses. And so, I really do not know whether I am in love with Marianina; but I am quite sure that I am not in love with Madame de l'Estorade. This, it seems to me, is a plain and honest answer.

Now, let us leave things to the Future, who is the master of us all.

The Comtesse de l'Estorade to Madame Octave de Camps.

PARIS, *April* 1839.

MY DEAR MADAME,—M. Dorlange came last evening to take leave of us. He is starting to-day for Arcis-sur-Aube, where he is to see his statue set up in its place. That also is the town where the Opposition are about to propose him as their candidate. M. de l'Estorade declares that no worse choice could have been made, and that he has not a chance of being elected;—but this is not what I have to write about.

M. Dorlange called early after dinner. I was alone, for M. de l'Estorade was dining with the Minister of the Interior; and the children, who had been on a long excursion in the afternoon, had of their own accord begged to go to bed before the usual hour. Thus the conversation previously interrupted by Madame de la Bastie was naturally re-opened; and I was about to ask M. Dorlange to finish the story, of which he had only given me a hint of the end, when old Lucas came in, bringing me a letter. It was from my Armand, to tell me that he had been in the sickroom all day, very unwell.

"I want the carriage," said I to Lucas, with such agitation as you may suppose.

"Well, madame, but monsieur ordered it to fetch him at half-past eight, and Tony is gone," replied Lucas.

"Then get me a hackney cab."

"I am sure I don't know whether I can find one," said the old man, who always raises difficulties. "It has just begun to rain."

Without noticing this objection, and quite forgetting M. Dorlange, whom I left somewhat embarrassed, not liking to leave without saying good-bye, I went to my room to put on my bonnet and shawl. Having done so in great haste, I returned to the drawing-room, where I still found my visitor.

"You must excuse me, monsieur," said I, "for leaving you so abruptly; I am hurrying off to the Collège Henri IV. I could not endure to spend the night in such anxiety as I am feeling in consequence of a note from my son, who tells me that he has been in the sickroom all day."

"But surely," said M. Dorlange, "you are not going alone in a hackney coach to such an out-of-the-way part of the town?"

"Lucas will come with me."

At this moment Lucas came in again. His words were fulfilled; there was not a cab to be had, and it was pouring in torrents. Time was flying; it was almost too late already to visit at the school, where everybody would be in bed by nine o'clock.

"I must go," said I to Lucas. "Go and put on your thick shoes, and we will go on foot with umbrellas."

I saw the man's face lengthen; he is no longer young; he likes his ease, and he complains of rheumatism in the winter. He suddenly found a number of objections; it was very late; we should *revolutionize* the school; I should certainly catch cold; M. Armand could not be very ill since he had written himself—my plan of campaign was evidently not at all to my old man's mind.

Then M. Dorlange very obligingly offered to go for me and come back to report the invalid, but such half-measures will not do for me—I wanted to see, and satisfy myself. So, with many thanks to him, I said to Lucas, in an authoritative tone:

"Come, go and get ready, and be quick, for one thing you have said that is perfectly true—it is growing late."

Thus nailed to the point, Lucas boldly hoisted the flag of rebellion.

"It is simply impossible, madame, that you should go out in such weather, and I do not want to get a scolding from the master for giving in to any such idea."

"Then you simply do not mean to obey me?"

"You know, madame, that for anything useful or reasonable I would do whatever you might order, even if it were to walk through fire."

"To be sure, warmth is good for the rheumatism, and rain is bad for it."

Then I turned to M. Dorlange without listening to the old rebel's reply, and said to him:

"Since you were good enough to offer to go alone on this errand, I venture to hope that you will not refuse me the support of your arm."

"Like Lucas," said he, "I do not see that this expedition is indispensable; however, as I have no fear of being scolded by M. de l'Estorade, I will, of course, have the honor of escorting you."

We set out; and as I went downstairs, I could not help thinking that life is full of singular coincidences. Here was a man whom I do not wholly trust, who, two months ago, manœuvred, like a pirate, to get sight of me, and to whom I had now entrusted myself with complete confidence, under conditions which the most favored lover would have hardly dared to dream of.

The weather really was horrible; we had not gone fifty yards when we were already drenched, in spite of Lucas' vast umbrella, held by M. Dorlange so as to shelter me by sacrificing himself. Then a new complication arose. A hackney cab went past; my companion hailed the driver; it was empty. To tell my escort that I could not allow him to get in with me was out of the question. Not only would such an implied doubt have been grossly uncivil, but it would have been derogatory to myself even to suggest it. And yet, you see, my dear friend, what slippery ways we tread, and how true it is that from the time of Dido and Æneas rain has always served the turn of lovers!

It is difficult to talk in a cab; the clatter of wheels and windows compels one to shout. M. Dorlange knew too that I was extremely uneasy, and he had the good taste to make no attempt at a prolonged conversation; just now and again he made some trivial remark to break the silence which otherwise would have been awkward under the circumstances.

When we reached the school, M. Dorlange, after handing me out, understood that he could not go in with me; he got into the coach again to wait for me.

Master Armand's indisposition was somewhat of a practical joke so far as I was concerned. His illness was no more than a headache, which since his note was written had completely disappeared. The doctor, who had seen him in the morning, to order something, had prescribed lime-flower tea, and told him he could return to the classroom next day. So I had taken a sledge-hammer to kill a flee, and committed a preposterous blunder in arriving at an hour when all the staff were in bed, to find my young gentleman still up and playing a game of chess with one of the attendants.

By the time I went out again the rain had ceased, and bright moonlight silvered the pavement, which the rain had so thoroughly washed that there was not a sign of mud. I was so oppressed and vexed that I longed for the fresh air. So I begged M. Dorlange to send away the coach, and we walked home. This was a fine chance for him; between the Panthéon and the Rue de Varenne there is time to say much. But M. Dorlange was so little inclined to avail himself of the situation, that, taking Master Armand's prank as his text, he expatiated on the mischief of spoiling children. The subject is one I have no liking for, and he might have discovered that from the dry reserve with which I took my part in the conversation.

"Come," thought I, "we must come to an end of this story, which is always interrupted, like the famous anecdote of Sancho's goatherd which could never be told."

So, cutting short his theories of education—

"It seems to me," said I to my earnest companion, "that

this would be a good opportunity for going on with the confidential narrative you were interrupted in. Here we are quite safe from any intrusion."

"I am afraid," said M. Dorlange, "that I am but a bad narrator. I exhausted all my genius the other day in communicating the history to Marie-Gaston."

"That," said I, with a laugh, "is against your principles of secrecy, in which a third person is one too many."

"Oh, Marie-Gaston and I are but one person. Besides, I had to give some answer to the odd fancies he had formed as to you and me."

"What—as to me!"

"Yes. He opines that by staring too hard at the sun one may be dazzled by its rays."

"Which, in less metaphorical language, means?——"

"That seeing how strange the circumstances were that led to my having the honor of your acquaintance, I might possibly, madame, in your society, fail to preserve my common-sense and self-possession."

"And your story answers this hypothesis of Marie-Gaston's?"

"You shall judge," said M. Dorlange.

And then, without further preamble, he told me a rather long story, which I do not repeat to you, my dear madame, because on the one hand it has really nothing to do with your functions as keeper of my conscience, and on the other it is mixed up with a family secret which demands more discretion on my part than I could have anticipated.

The upshot of the matter is that M. Dorlange is in love with the woman who had sat in his imagination for the Saint Ursula. Still, as it must be said that she is apparently for ever out of his reach, it did not seem to me quite impossible that he might sooner or later transfer to me the feeling he still preserves for her. Hence, when, having finished his narrative, he asked me whether I did not take it as a triumphant refutation of our friend's absurd fears, I could but reply:

"Modesty makes it incumbent on me to share your confi-

dence. At the same time, a cannon ball often kills by ricochet."

"And you believe me guilty of the audacity which Marie-Gaston fears may be so fatal to me?"

"I do not know that it would be audacity," said I, rather harshly; "but if you had such a fancy and took it to heart, I should, I own, think you greatly to be pitied."

His reply was a home-thrust:

"Well, madame, you need not pity me.—In my opinion, first love is a kind of vaccination which saves a man from catching the complaint a second time."

This closed the conversation; the story had been a long one, and we were at home. I asked M. Dorlange to come upstairs, a politeness he accepted, remarking that M. de l'Estorade had probably come in, and he could say good-bye to him.

My husband was in fact at home. I do not know whether Lucas, to anticipate the blame I should have cast on him, had done his best to misrepresent my proceedings, or whether my maternal exploit prompted M. de l'Estorade, for the first time in his life, to a spasm of jealousy of which he was unable to conceal the unfamiliar symptoms; at any rate, he received me with an indignant rating, saying that nothing was so unheard of as the idea of going out at this hour, and in such weather, to inquire after an invalid who, by announcing his illness himself, showed it was not in the least serious.

After allowing him to go on for some time in a highly unbecoming manner, I thought it was time to put an end to the scene.

"Well," said I sharply, "I wished to get some sleep tonight; I went to the school in pouring rain. Now I have come back in beautiful moonlight, and I beg to remind you that after kindly consenting to escort me, M. Dorlange, who leaves Paris to-morrow, came upstairs to bid you good-bye."

I have habitually too much influence over M. de l'Estorade for this call to order to fail of its effect; still, I could see that there was something of the aggrieved husband in his tone; for, having brought in M. Dorlange to divert his thoughts, I

soon perceived that I had but made him a victim to my ogre's ill-temper, which was now vented on him.

After telling him that his nomination for election had been much discussed at the Minister's dinner-table, M. de l'Estorade, with evident satisfaction, told him all the reasons which must lead to his failing conspicuously; the constituency of Arcis-sur-Aube was one of those where the Ministry were most secure of the votes; a man of extraordinary ability had already been sent down there, and had for some days been *working up* the place, and he had sent the most flourishing reports to the Government. All this was dealing in generalities, and M. Dorlange replied with perfect modesty, and the manner of a man who has prepared himself beforehand for all the freaks of chance that may affect his return. But M. de l'Estorade had a last shaft to fling which certainly could not fail to prove effective, since with the same blow it would hit the candidate and the profligate—if profligate he were.

"Listen to me, my dear sir," said M. de l'Estorade to his victim, "when a man rushes into a parliamentary career, he must remember that he has to show every card—his public and his private life. His adversaries overhaul his past and present with merciless hands, and woe to him whose life has the shadow of a stain!—Well, I may tell you plainly, this evening a little scandal was raked up—a very little one in the life of an artist, but one which, as affecting a representative of the people, assumes far more serious proportions. You understand me. I am alluding to the handsome Italian woman who lives under your roof. Take care; you may be called to account by some puritan voter for the more or less doubtful morality of her connection with you."

M. Dorlange's reply was very dignified:

"I can have but one wish for those who choose to question me on that detail of my domestic life," said he, "and that is that they may have nothing worse to look back upon in theirs. —If I had not already bored Madame la Comtesse with one interminable story during our walk home, I would tell you

that of the pretty Italian, and you would see that her presence in my house need deprive me of none of the esteem you have kindly honored me with."

"But indeed," said M. de l'Estorade, suddenly mollified by hearing that our long walk had been spent in narrating history, "you take my remarks far too seriously! As I said but just now, an artist needs a handsome model, nothing can be more natural; but it is a piece of furniture that is of no use to gentlemen engaged in politics."

"What appears to be of more use to them," retorted M. Dorlange, with some vivacity, "is the advantage that may be taken of a calumny greedily accepted with evil haste, and with no effort to verify it.—However, far from dreading an explanation on the subject you are pleased to discuss, I am eager for it; and the Ministry would be doing me a service by instructing so clever an inquisitor as they have put on my track to bring this delicate matter before my constituents."

"So you are going to-morrow?" asked M. de l'Estorade, finding that he had started on a patch where, instead of bringing M. Dorlange to confusion, he had afforded him an opportunity of answering with no little haughtiness of tone and phrase.

"Yes, and early in the day, so that I will have the honor now of wishing you good-night, for I still have some packing to finish."

With these words M. Dorlange rose, and after bowing to me rather formally, he left the room, not shaking hands with my husband, who, indeed, did not offer him the opportunity.

M. de l'Estorade, to avoid the impending and inevitable explanation, at once exclaimed:

"Well, and what was the matter with Armand?"

"What was the matter with Armand matters little," replied I, "as you may suppose from my having returned without him and showing no anxiety; what is a far more interesting question is what is the matter with you, for I never saw you so out of tune, so bitter and cross-grained."

"What! Because I told that ridiculous candidate that he might go into mourning at once over his chances?"

"In the first place, it was not complimentary, and at any rate the time was ill-chosen, when my motherly alarms had just inflicted an odious amount of trouble on the man you attacked."

"I cannot stand officious people," retorted M. de l'Estorade, in a higher tone than he usually adopts with me. "And, after all, if this gentleman had not been on the spot to offer you his escort, you would not have set out on this unseemly expedition."

"You are mistaken. I should have gone in a still more unseemly manner; for I should have gone alone, as your servants are the masters here, and refused to escort me."

"But, after all, you must confess that if any one had met you at half-past nine at night, walking arm in arm with M. Dorlange, out by the Panthéon, it would have been thought strange, to say the least."

Then, affecting to have just discovered what I had known for an hour past:

"Bless me, monsieur!" cried I, "after fifteen years of married life are you doing me the honor of being jealous for the first time? Then, indeed, I can understand that, in spite of your regard for the proprieties, you took advantage of my being present to question M. Dorlange on the not very proper subject of the woman who is supposed to be his mistress. It was neither more nor less than very basely perfidious; you were trying to lower him in my eyes."

Thus riddled with shot, my hapless husband tried indeed to beat about the bush, and at last found no better alternative than to ring for Lucas, whom he lectured pretty sharply; and there the matter ended.

But although I had won an easy victory, the great little incidents of the evening left a most uncomfortable impression on my mind. I had come in quite satisfied, thinking that I now knew exactly *where to have* M. Dorlange. To be honest, at the moment when he uttered that magniloquent,

"Do not pity me," as a woman is always more or less a woman, my vanity felt a little shock; but as I came upstairs I reflected that the firm and simple tone in which he spoke commanded belief. It was undoubtedly a natural and frank outburst of genuine feeling, which was not aimed at me, but certainly intended for some one else. So I might be perfectly at my ease.

But, then, what is to be said of the conjugal tact which, while trying to make the man—of whom I had really been thinking too much—commit himself in my presence, gave him an opportunity of appearing in a better light than ever, and to the greatest advantage? For there is no doubt whatever that the indignation with which M. Dorlange retaliated on the malignancy of which he was the object was the answer of an easy conscience, sure, too, of being able to refute the calumny. What, my dear madame, I ask you, what is this man whose vulnerable point is not discoverable, whom we have seen on one or two occasions positively heroic—and that as if he himself did not perceive the fact, as if he never lived but in that high air, and greatness were his element? Is it possible that, all appearances to the contrary, this Italian woman is nothing to him?

Are there, then, in the midst of our small and colorless society still some characters so strongly tempered that they can walk on the very precipice of opportunity and never fall! What a nature must that be that can plunge through thorns and leave no wool! I had fancied I could make a friend of him!

Nay, I will not play at that game. Supposing this Dante Alighieri of the chisel to be convinced at last that his Beatrice will never return to him; supposing that he should again, as he has done once already, look round on me—what could I do? Is a woman ever safe against the powerful fascination that such a man must exert? As M. de Montriveau said to the poor Duchesse de Langeais, not only must *she never touch the axe,* but she must keep as far from it as she can, for fear that a beam reflected from such polished steel should dazzle her eyes.

Happily, M. de l'Estorade is already hostile to this dangerous man; but my husband may be quite easy, I shall take care to encourage and cultivate this germ of enmity. And besides this, if M. Dorlange should be elected, he and my husband will be in opposite camps; and political passions—thank Heaven!—have often cut short older and better established intimacies than this.

"But he saved your little girl," you will say; "you were afraid of his loving you, and he does not think of you at all; he is a man of cultivated intellect and magnanimous feeling, with whom there is not a fault to the found?——"

What arguments are these, my dear lady?—He frightens me, and that is enough. And when I am frightened, I neither argue nor reason; I only consider whether I have legs and breath, and simply run and run till I feel myself in safety.

Dorlange to Marie-Gaston.

PARIS, *April* 1839.

On coming in from taking leave of the Estorades, I find your letter, my dear friend, announcing your immediate arrival. I will wait here all to-morrow; but in the evening, without any further delay, I must set out for Arcis-sur-Aube, where, within a week, the end of my political struggle is to be fought out. What supporters and abettors I have in that town which—as I am informed—I am so anxious to represent; on whose help or opposition I am to build my hopes; in one word, who it is that is making this electoral bed for me to lie in,—of all this I know no more now than I did a year ago when I was first apprised of my parliamentary vocation.

Only a few days since did I receive a communication emanating from the paternal office, not from Stockholm this time, but with the Paris postmark. From the tenor of this document I should hardly be surprised to hear that the high functions fulfilled in the northern capital by the mysterious author of my being were simply those of a corporal in the Prussian army; for it is impossible to give instructions in a

more domineering and peremptory tone, or with more tiresome regard for the minutest details.

The note has a title or heading; as thus:

WHAT MY SON IS TO DO

On receipt of *these presents* I am to send off the "Saint Ursula," to see it packed myself in a case, and address it, by quick goods vans, to Mother Marie des Anges, Superior of the House of the Ursuline Sisters at Arcis-sur-Aube, AUBE —you understand?—In fact, but for this added information I might have fancied that Arcis-sur-Aube was situated in the department of the Gironde or of Finisterre.—I am there to make an arrangement with the carrier's agents to insure the delivery of the parcel—my "Saint Ursula" a parcel!—at the door of the convent chapel. I am then commanded to start a very few days later, so as to reach the aforenamed town of Arcis-sur-Aube by the second of May at latest. You see, these are military orders; so much so that I half thought of taking out a soldier's pass instead or an ordinary permit to travel, and of taking my journey at the regulation fare of three sous per league.

The hotel I am to put up at is expressly mentioned: I am to stay at the *Hôtel de la Poste;* hence, if I should happen to prefer the *Three Blackamoors* or the *Silver Lion,* which are to be found there, no doubt, as in every country town, I must not indulge the fancy. Finally, on the day before I start, I am to announce, in any newspapers I can work upon, the fact of my intending to stand as a candidate for election in the electoral district of Arcis-sur-Aube (Aube), but not to put forward any declaration of my political creed, which would be useless and premature. And the whole concludes with instructions—a little humiliating perhaps, but giving me some faith in the progress of affairs—to call on the morning of the day when I set out on Mongenod Brothers, where I can again draw a sum of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, which ought to be lying there in my name. "I

am to take the greatest care," the document goes on, "that in conveying this sum from Paris to Arcis-sur-Aube it is neither lost nor stolen."

What, my good sir, do you make of this last clause. The money "*ought* to be lying there"—then it may not be; and if not, what then? What am I to do with it at Arcis? Am I to work my election in the English fashion?—that, no doubt, is why a profession of faith would be "useless and premature." As to the advice not to lose the money or allow myself to be robbed—don't you think it makes me wonderfully young again? Since reading it I have quite longed to suck my thumb and get a padded cap.

However, as to my lord and father, though he puts my mind on the rack by all these queer ways of his, I could exclaim—but for the respect I owe him—like Don Basilio in speaking of Almaviva, "That devil of a man has his pockets full of irresistible arguments!"

So I shut my eyes and give myself up to the stream that is carrying me on; and in spite of the news of your early advent, I must call to-morrow morning on Mongenod Brothers and set forth with a brave heart, picturing to myself the amazement of the good folks of Arcis when they see me drop into their midst, as sudden and as startling an apparition as a Jack-in-the-box.

I have already made my mark in Paris. The *National* announced me as a candidate yesterday morning in the most flaming terms; and this evening it would seem that I was the subject of much discussion at the house of the Minister of the Interior, where M. de l'Estorade was dining. I must in honesty add that, according to M. de l'Estorade, the general impression was that I must inevitably fail. In the district of Arcis, it would seem, the worst the Government had to fear was a *Left-Centre* candidate; the democratic party, which I am by way of representing, can hardly be said to have any existence there. The *Left-Centre* candidate has already been brought to his senses by the dispatch of a particularly alert and skilful canvasser; and at his moment, when I am fling-

ing my name to the winds, the election of the Conservative is already a certainty.

Added to these elements of inevitable failure, M. de l'Estorade was good enough to speak of a circumstance as to which, my dear fellow, I am surprised that you should never have given me a sermon, for it is one of the most pleasing of the calumnies set rolling in the Montcornet drawing-room by the honorable and highly honored Monsieur Bixiou. It has to do with a very handsome Italian woman whom I am supposed to have brought with me from Rome, and to be living with in most uncanonical relationship.

Pray tell me what has kept you from asking for explanations of the matter? Did you think the case so atrocious that you were shy of offending my sense of decency by alluding to it in any way? Or is it that you have such confidence in my high moral sense that you need no certificate on that point?—I had not time to go into the necessary explanations with M. de l'Estorade, nor have I time now to volunteer them to you. I mention the incident only to bring me to a remark which I believe to be true, and which I would beg you to verify when you come to Paris.

I have a strong notion that M. de l'Estorade would not be best pleased at my succeeding in this electoral campaign. He has never expressed much approbation of my plans, and has constantly done his utmost to divert me from them—always indeed by urging considerations in my own interest. But now that the idea has taken shape, and is even discussed in Ministerial circles, my gentleman has turned sour; and while finding malicious pleasure in promising me defeat, he brings up the pretty little activity under which he hopes to smother and bury me—as a friendly act. Now, why?

I will tell you. The fact is, that though he is under an obligation to me, the good man by his high social position feels himself my superior in a way which my election to the Chamber would nullify, and he does not like the notion of renouncing it. For, after all, what is an artist—even if he were a genius—in comparison with a Peer of France, a bigwig

who has a finger in the supreme direction of great political and social questions—a man who can buttonhole the Ministers and the King, who, if he were capable of such an audacious flight, has a right to blackball the Budget? And is it conceivable that I, in my turn, should want to be such a privileged person, with even greater importance and authority as being a member of the elective body? Is it not a trying piece of insolence and conceit? Hence is M. le Comte furious!

Nor is this all. These politicians by right divine have a fixed idea: they believe themselves to have been initiated by long study into a science supposed to be very abstruse, which they call Statecraft, and which they alone have a right to know and practise, as none but physicians may practise medicine. So they cannot endure that without having taken out a license, any low fellow—such as a journalist, for instance, or, lower still, an artist, an image-maker—should dare to poach on their domain and speak as they do. A poet, an artist, a writer may have great gifts—that they are ready to grant; in fact, their business requires it; but they cannot be statesmen. Chateaubriand himself, though naturally in a position which justified him in making a place for himself on the Olympus of Government, was nevertheless shown the door, and one morning a very brief note, signed "Joseph Villèle," sent him packing—as was but proper!—back to *René, Atala,* and other literary trivialities.

I know that time, and that stalwart posthumous daughter of us all whom we call Posterity, will in the long run do us all full justice and put every man in his right place. In 2039, if the world holds out so long, most men will still know who, in 1839, were Canalis, Joseph Bridau, Daniel d'Arthez, Stidmann, and Léon de Lora; while only an infinitely small number will be aware that at the same time M. le Comte de l'Estorade was a Peer of France and President of the Court of Exchequer; that M. le Comte de Rastignac was Minister of Public Works, and M. le Baron Martial de la Roche-Hugon, his brother-in-law, a diplomatist and privy

councillor on special service more or less extraordinary. Still, pending this postponed resifting and far-off justice, I do not think it a bad thing that these great men in office should have a reminder to the effect that, short of being a Richelieu or a Colbert, they are subject to competition, and must take the consequences. Thus, merely out of this spirit of contrariness, I am bent on my project; and if I should be elected, unless you can assure me this evening that I have misunderstood l'Estorade's behavior, I shall find some opportunity for making him and some others feel that a man who has the will can step over the palings of their little enclosure and figure in it as their equal.

But I have talked too much of myself, my dear friend, without thinking of the painful feelings that must attend your return here. How will you bear it? And will you not, instead of setting your sorrows aside, rather go forth to meet them, and take a melancholy pleasure in reviving their bitterness? Well, I might say of such great griefs what I said just now of the great men in office: they must be regarded in their place in time and space, and then they are intangible, imperceptible, they are held of no more account in a man's life when his biography is written than the hairs he combs out of his head every morning. That charming lunatic with whom you spent three years of matrimonial ecstasy put out a hand, as she thought, where Death was—and Death, mocking at her schemes, her plans, at the refinement and graces she added to life, snatched at her suddenly and brutally. You remain: You, with youth on your side and the gifts of intellect, and with what is, believe me, an element of power—deep and premature disgust of things. Now, why not do as I am doing? Why not join me in the political arena? Then there would be two of us to carry out my plans, and the world would see what can be done by two determined and energetic men, yoked together as it were, and both pulling at the heavy collar of justice and truth.

But if you think that I am too much bent on becoming infectious, or inoculating all and sundry with my parlia-

mentary yellow-fever, return at least to the world of letters where you have already made your mark, and exert your imagination to enable you to ignore your heart, which speaks too constantly of the past. I, for my part, will make as much stir for you as I can; and even if it should cost me part of my sleep to keep up our correspondence to divert your mind whether you will or no, I shall take care to keep you informed of all the vicissitudes of the drama I am about to play a part in.

Since, on your arrival in Paris, you will have no fixed habitation, I should take it very kindly, and feel you quite your old self, if you would but make yourself at home in my house instead of going on to Ville-d'Avray, which is a bad and dangerous place for you. Then you can judge of my handsome housekeeper, and see how she is slandered and misunderstood. You will be near to l'Estorade, who will, I expect, prove quite a comfort to you; and it will be an admirable way of expiating all the involuntary offences of which you have been guilty towards me. Just on the chance, I have given the necessary orders, and your room is ready for you. The quiet part of the town where I live will serve as a transition to the infernally noisy heart of Paris, which I doubt your ever again becoming accustomed to. I live at no great distance from the Rue d'Enfer, where we formerly were at home together, and where we were often so happy.

What dreams we dreamed, what schemes we laid, and how little life has realized of them all! Our commonest day-dream was of glory, and that, the only one in which we might perhaps not have become bankrupt, we have voluntarily abandoned: you to suffer and weep, I to run after a will-o'-the-wisp relationship on which I may not after all have to congratulate myself!—The ever-changing current has carried everything before it—our dykes, our flower-gardens, our budding rose-trees, our country houses; one thing alone has hung by its anchor, our old and sacred friendship. Do nothing more to wreck it, I entreat, dear prodigal, nor run the risk of

a quarrel with the Northern Court of which I may some day be the Suger or the Sully.

P.S.—You have not arrived, my dear friend, and I must close my letter, which will be handed to you by my housekeeper when you call—for, of course, your first visit will be to me. Till then you cannot know that I am gone.

I went this morning to the bankers Mongenod: the two hundred and fifty thousand francs were ready, but with the most extraordinary directions—in the name of *M. le Comte de Sallenauve, known as Dorlange, sculptor, Rue de l'Ouest, No.* 42. And in spite of this designation, which has never been mine, the money was handed over to me without a demur. Under the eyes of the cashier I had presence of mind enough not to seem utterly amazed by my new name and title; but I had a private interview with M. Mongenod *senior,* a man of the highest character in the banking world, and to him I confessed my surprise, begging for any explanation he might be able to afford me. He could give me none: the money was forwarded to him through a Dutch bank, his correspondent at Rotterdam, and that is all he knows.

Bless me! what next I wonder? Am I now to be a nobleman? Has the moment arrived when my father will reveal himself?

I am just starting in a state of excitement and anxiety that you may imagine. Till further instructions I shall address to you at my house; if you will not consent to take up your abode there let me know of your whereabouts, for it strikes me that we shall have a great deal to say to each other. Not a word, I entreat you, to the Estorades—all this is strictly between ourselves.

Dorlange to Marie-Gaston.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, *May* 3, 1839.

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—Last evening, at seven o'clock, in the presence of Maître Achille Pigoult, notary to the King in the town of Arcis-sur-Aube, the obsequies were solemnized

of Charles Dorlange, who, presently, like a butterfly emerging from the larva, fluttered out on the world under the name and person of Charles de Sallenauve, son of François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenauve. Hereinafter are set forth the recorded facts which preceded this great and glorious metempsychosis.

On the evening of May 1st I left Paris in all the official revelry of St. Philip's Day; and on the following afternoon, in obedience to paternal instructions, I made my entry into the good town of Arcis-sur-Aube. On getting out of the chaise my amazement was considerable, as you may imagine, on discerning, in the street where the diligence had just arrived, that evasive Jacques Bricheteau whom I had never seen since our strange meeting in the Ile Saint-Louis. But this time, instead of behaving like Jean de Nivelle, behold him coming towards me with a smile on his face; and holding out his hand, he said:

"At last, my dear sir, we are almost at an end of these mysteries, and you will soon, I hope, find no further reason to complain of me."

At the same time, with an air of anxious solicitude that was too much for him, he added:

"You have brought the money?"

"Yes," I replied. "Neither lost nor stolen," and I took out the pocket-book that contained the two hundred and fifty thousand francs in banknotes.

"That is well," said Jacques Bricheteau. "Now we will go to the *Hôtel de la Poste*.—You doubtless know who is waiting for you?"

"No, indeed," said I.

"Then you did not observe the name under which the money was made payable?"

"On the contrary—and anything so strange could not fail to strike me and set my imagination working."

"Well, presently the veil will be removed of which, so far, a corner has just been lifted that you might not be too sud-

denly startled by the great and happy event that is about to take place in your life."

"Is my father here?"

I asked the question eagerly, and yet without the deep emotion I should probably have felt at the thought of embracing my mother.

"Yes," replied Jacques Bricheteau. "But I think it well to warn you of a possible chill on your meeting. The Marquis has gone through much suffering. The Court life to which he has since been accustomed has made him unready to display any expression of feeling; besides, he has a perfect horror of anything suggesting *bourgeois* manners; so you must not be surprised at the aristocratically cold and dignified reception you may meet with. He is kind at heart, and you will appreciate him more as you know him better."

"These preliminaries are highly encouraging," thought I. And as I myself did not feel any very ardent predispositions, I augured that this first interview would be at a temperature of some degrees below zero.

On going into the room where the Marquis awaited me, I saw a very tall, very thin, very bald man, seated at a table on which he was arranging papers. On hearing the door open, he pushed his spectacles up on his forehead, rested his hands on the arms of his chair, and looking round at us he waited.

"Monsieur le Comte de Sallenauve," said Jacques Bricheteau, announcing me with the solemnity of an usher of ambassadors or a groom of the Chambers.

But in the presence of the man to whom I owed my life the ice in me was instantly melted; I stepped forward with an eager impulse, feeling the tears rise to my eyes. He did not move. There was not the faintest trace of agitation in his face, which had that peculiar look of high dignity that used to be called "the grand air"; he merely held out his hand, limply grasped mine, and then said:

"Be seated, monsieur—for I have not yet the right to call you my son."

When Jacques Bricheteau and I had taken chairs—

"Then you have no objection," said this strange kind of father, "to assuming the political position we are trying to secure for you?"

"None at all," said I. "The notion startled me at first, but I soon grew accustomed to it; and to insure success, I have punctually carried out all the instructions that were conveyed to me."

"Excellent," said the Marquis, taking up from the table a gold snuff-box which he twirled in his fingers.

Then, after a short silence, he added:

"Now I owe you certain explanations. Our good friend Jacques Bricheteau, if he will have the kindness, will lay them before you."—A sort of echo of the royal formula, *"My Chancellor will tell you the rest."*

"To begin at the beginning," said Jacques Bricheteau, accepting the task thus thrust upon him, "I ought to tell you, monsieur, that you are not a Sallenauve in the direct line. On his return from the Emigration, about the year 1808, M. le Marquis here present made the acquaintance of your mother, and you are the issue of that connection. Your mother, as you already know, died at your birth, and as a misfortune never comes single, shortly after this terrible sorrow M. de Sallenauve, being implicated in a plot against the Imperial throne, was obliged to fly the country. M. le Marquis, like myself, a native of Arcis, honored me with his confidence, and on the eve of this second exile he placed your young life in my charge. I accepted the responsibility, I will not say gladly, but with sincere gratitude."

At these words the Marquis held out his hand to Jacques Bricheteau, who was sitting near him, and after a silent pressure—which, I may say, did not seem to agitate them deeply—Jacques Bricheteau went on:

"The elaborate and mysterious precautions I so carefully contrived, in order to conceal the functions I had accepted, may be accounted for by many reasons. I might say that every change of government that we have lived under since your birth has indirectly reacted on you. While the Empire lasted,

I feared lest a power which was not reputed indulgent to those who attacked it might not include you in your father's banishment, and that first suggested the idea of giving you a sort of anonymous identity. Under the Restoration, I had reason to fear another form of hostility. The Sallenauve family, of which M. le Marquis here present is the sole surviving representative, was then all-powerful. The circumstances of your birth had got wind, and it had not escaped their perspicacity that monsieur your father had taken care not to admit his paternity, so as to be able to leave you his whole fortune, of which, as a recognized natural child, the law would only have allowed a fixed portion.

"The obscurity that surrounded you seemed to me the best protection against the investigations of your money-seeking relations; and certain suspicious proceedings on their part to spy on me at different times showed that my anticipations were justified. Finally, after the Revolution of July, I was afraid for you of your connection with me. I had seen the change of dynasty with deep regret; and having allowed myself to become involved in some overt acts of rebellion, since I had no belief in its stability—for men are always ready to fight a government that is forced upon them, and to which they are averse—I found myself on the black list of the police——"

On this, remembering that at the *Café des Arts* Jacques Bricheteau had been the object of very different suspicions, I could not help smiling, and the *Chancellor* pausing, said with extreme solemnity:

"Do these details that I have the honor of giving you by any misfortune appear to you doubtful?"

When I had accounted for the expression of my face—

"The waiter," said Jacques Bricheteau, "was not altogether in the wrong. I have for many years been employed by the police in the public health department; but I am not a spy—on the contrary, I have more than once very nearly been a victim.—Now, to return to the secrecy I still preserved as to our connection, though I did not apprehend positive persecu-

tion as resulting to you from knowing me, it seemed to me that such an acquaintance might be detrimental to your career. 'Sculptors,' I reflected, 'cannot get on without the support of Government. I might possibly prevent his getting commissions.' I ought also to say that at the time when I gave you notice that your allowance was to cease, I had for some years lost track of Monsieur le Marquis. Of what use was it, then, to tell you the history of the past, since it apparently could have no effect on your future prospects?

"I decided that it was best to leave you in complete ignorance, and busied myself in inventing some fiction which might mislead your curiosity, and at the same time relieve me from the long privation I endured by avoiding any direct intercourse with you——"

"The man you employed as your representative," said I, interrupting him, "was well chosen, no doubt, from the point of view of secrecy, but you must admit that he is not attractive."

"Poor Gorenflot!' said the organist, laughing. "He is simply one of the parish bell-ringers, and I employ him to blow the organ. I do not know whether the author of *Notre-Dame de Paris* had ever seen him when he invented Quasimodo."

During this parenthesis an absurd sound fell on our ears; a distinct snore from my father gave us to understand that either he took very little interest in all these explanations given in his name, or that he thought them too prolix. Whether it was his conceit as an orator that was nettled, or what else it was that roused Jacques Bricheteau's temper, I know not, but he started to his feet with annoyance, and violently shook the sleeper's arm, exclaiming:

"What, Marquis!—if you sleep like this when sitting in Council, my word! the country must be well governed!"

M. de Sallenauve opened his eyes, shook himself, and speaking to me, he said:

"Excuse me, M. le Comte, but I have traveled post for ten days and nights without stopping, in order to be in time to

meet you here; and though I spent last night in a bed, I am still rather tired."

He then rose, took a large pinch of snuff, and paced the room, while Jacques Bricheteau went on:

"It is rather more than a year since I first heard again from your father. He explained his long silence and his purposes for you, saying that, perhaps for some years to come, it was absolutely necessary that he should still maintain the strictest incognito. It was just then that chance threw you in my way. I found you prepared to rush into any folly to get to the bottom of the secret of which you could no longer doubt the existence——"

"You are good at a quick removal!" said I, with a laugh to the erewhile lodger of the Quai de Béthune.

"I did better than that. Tormented by the idea that, in spite of my efforts, you would succeed in piercing the darkness I had so elaborately left you in, and at the very moment when M. le Marquis might think it most indispensable——"

"You set out for Stockholm?"

"No, for your father's residence; but I posted at Stockholm the letter he gave me for you."

"But I do not quite understand——"

"Nothing can be simpler," said the Marquis decisively. "I do not live in Sweden, and we wished to put you off the scent."

"Would you wish to tell the rest of the story yourself?" said Jacques Bricheteau, though not seeming anxious to be superseded in his narrative; for, as you see, he has an easy and elegant flow of language.

"Not at all, not at all—go on," said the Marquis; "you are doing it admirably."

"The presence here of M. le Marquis," Jacques Bricheteau went on, "will not, as I must warn you, immediately clear up all the mysteries which have hitherto complicated your relations. For the furtherance of your future prospects, and of his own, he reserves the right of leaving you in ignorance for some time yet of the name of the country where he hopes to see you invited to succeed him, and of certain other details

of his biography. In fact, he is here this day chiefly with a view to avoiding further explanations, and to renew the lease, so to speak, of your patient curiosity. Having observed that your equivocal family circumstances were likely to involve you in difficulties in the political career you are entering on, or, at least, in mortifications, on my making a remark to that effect in one of my letters, your father determined to delay no longer the legal and official recognition which the extinction of all his family made so desirable for you; and he set out from his distant residence to carry it into effect.

"The recognition and legitimization of a natural son is a serious matter, surrounded by legal complications. An authenticated affidavit must be taken in the presence of a notary; and even though the father's personal deposition can be represented by a specially prepared document, M. le Marquis thought that the formalities indispensable to make this power of attorney effective might divulge the secret of his identity, not only to your disadvantage, but in the foreign land where he is married, and to some extent naturalized; and that secret it is still incumbent on him to keep for a time. This decided him. He made an excuse to take a few weeks' absence, arrived, posting all the way, and taking me by surprise, arranged for our meeting here.

"In the course of such a long and hurried journey he feared that the considerable sum of money he is devoting to secure your election might not be quite safe in his keeping, and he therefore transmitted it through his bankers, to be drawn on a certain day. That is why, on your arrival, I asked you the question which may have surprised you.—Now I have to ask you another of far greater importance: Do you consent to take M. de Sallenauve's name and be acknowledged by him as his son?"

"I am no lawyer," said I; "but it seems to me that, even if I did not feel highly honored by it, it does not lie in my hands to decline such a recognition."

"I beg your pardon," said Jacques Bricheteau; "you might be the son of a very undesirable father, and find it to your

interest to dispute the relationship; in the case as it stands you could plead, probably with success, to decline the favor proposed. I ought also to tell you—and I know that I am expressing the intentions of M. le Marquis—that if you do not think a man who has already spent half a million of francs out of pocket with a view to your election a father altogether to your mind, we leave you perfectly free, and have no wish to coerce you."

"Quite so, quite so," said M. de Sallenauve, in a short, sharp tone and the thin high pipe which is peculiar to these relics of the old aristocracy.

Mere politeness required me to say that I was only too happy to accept the parentage thus pressed on me; and in reply to the few words I spoke to that effect, Jacques Bricheteau went on:

"And we do not ask you to 'buy a *father* in a poke.'—Not so much with a view to command your confidence, which he believes he has won, as to enable you to judge of the family whose name you will bear, M. le Marquis will place before you all the title-deeds and parchments that are in his possession; and besides this, though it is a long time since he left France, he can prove his identity by the evidence of his still living contemporaries, which will serve to corroborate the validity of the act he will put his name to.—For instance, among the persons of unimpeachable honor who have already recognized him, I may mention the venerable Mother Superior of the Ursuline Sisters here, Mother Marie des Anges—for whom, I may add, you have executed a masterpiece."

"Yes, on my honor, a very pretty thing," said the Marquis. "If you are as strong in politics——"

"Well, then, Marquis," said Jacques Bricheteau, who seemed to me a little overbearing, "will you and our young friend proceed to verify those family papers?"

"It is quite unnecessary," said I.

And I must own that it did not seem to me that I was running any great risk; for, after all, of what consequence were such papers in the hands of a man who might have forged or stolen them?

But my father would not let me off; for more than two hours he spread before me deeds, pedigrees, settlements, letters patent, a thousand documents, to prove that the Sallenauves are, with the exception of the Cinq-Cygnes, one of the oldest families in the Province of Champagne generally, and of the department of the Aube in particular. I may add that this display of archives had a running accompaniment of endless details in words, which certainly gave the identity of the last Marquis de Sallenauve a very convincing semblance of genuineness.

On all other subjects my father is apt to be laconic; his mind is not, I should say, remarkably open, and he is always ready to leave his Chancellor to speak for him. But on the subject of his family papers he was bewilderingly full of anecdotes, reminiscences, and heraldic information; in short, the complete gentleman of an older time, ignorant or superficial on most subjects, but a Benedictine for erudition on everything connected with his ancestors.

There we should have sat, I believe, till now but for Bricheteau's intervention: as he saw the Marquis preparing to complete his endless chronicle by reading aloud to me a voluminous memorial, intended to refute a certain passage in the *Historiettes* of Tallemant des Réaux, which was not written to the honor and glory of the Sallenauves, the judicious organist remarked that it was dinner-time if we meant to arrive punctually at seven at Maître Achille Pigoult's office, as had been arranged.

So we dined, not at the *table d'hôte,* but in a private room. There was nothing remarkable about the meal, unless it were the length of time it lasted in consequence of the absorbed silence and slowness of the Marquis' deglutition, in consequence of the loss of all his teeth.

So by seven o'clock we were at Maître Pigoult's——

But it is near on two in the morning, and I am dropping asleep; so, till to-morrow,—when, if I have time, I will go on with this letter and the circumstantial account of all that took place in the notary's office. However, you know the upshot

of it all, like a man who turns to the page of a novel to see whether Evelina marries her Arthur, and you may let me off the details. As I step into bed, I shall say to myself: Good-night, M. de Sallenauve.

In fact, that old rascal Bricheteau was clumsy enough in foisting on me such a name as Dorlange; it was only fit for some hero of romance under the Empire, or one of the provincial tenors on the lookout for an engagement under the meagre shade of the Palais-Royal. You will owe me no grudge, I trust, for leaving you in favor of my bed, where I shall fall asleep to the soft murmurs of the Aube. In the unspeakable stillness of the night in a small country town, I can hear its ripples from this room.

May 4, five in the morning.

I had counted on slumbers gladdened by the fairest dreams; and I had not been asleep one hour when I woke, stung to the quick by a horrible thought. But before communicating it to you—for it really has no common-sense—I must tell you what took place last evening at the notary's. Some of the incidents of that scene may perhaps have had something to do with the phantasmagoria that have since danced through my brain. After Maître Pigoult's maid-servant, a country wench of the purest breed, had led us through an office of the most venerably antique type—where, however, no clerks were to be seen working in the evening, as in Paris—she showed us into her master's private room, a large room, cold and damp, and barely lighted by two composition candles on the desk. Notwithstanding a sharp north wind that was blowing, in honor of the poet's month of May and of the spring, as declared by law at this season of the year, there was no fire on the hearth, though the wood was laid for a cheerful blaze.

Maître Achille Pigoult, a feeble little man, much marked with small-pox, and afflicted with green spectacles, over which, however, he can flash a look of great keenness and intelligence, asked us if we found the room warm enough. On our replying in the affirmative—which he must have seen was a mere

form of politeness—he had carried his incendiary purpose so far as to strike a match, when, from one of the darkest corners of the room, a broken and quavering voice, whose owner we had not yet discerned, opposed this lavish extravagance.

"No, no, Achille, do not light the fire," cried the old man. "There are five of us in the room; the candles give a good deal of heat, and we shall be suffocated before long."

To these words of this hot-blooded Nestor, the Marquis exclaimed:

"Why, it is worthy M. Pigoult, the old justice of the peace!"

The old man, thus recognized, rose and came up to my father, whom he examined narrowly.

"To be sure!" said he. "And I know you for a native of the province, of the old block; Achille told me the truth when he promised me that I should meet two old acquaintances. You," said he to the organist, "are little Bricheteau, nephew to the good Mother-Superior Marie des Anges. But that tall fellow, with his face like a duke—I cannot put a name to him—and you must not be too hard on my memory, for after eighty-six years of hard service—it has a right to be a little stiff in the joints."

"Now, then, grandfather," said Achille Pigoult, "try to furbish up your recollections—and you, gentlemen, not a word, not a hint.—I want to enlighten my faith. I have not the honor of knowing the client on whose behalf I am about to act, and, to be strictly regular, proof of his identity is required. The act of Louis XII., passed in 1498, and of François I. confirming it, in 1535, make this imperative on notaries —*gardes-notes* as they were called—to forefend any substitution of parties to such deeds. The law is too reasonable to have fallen into desuetude; and, for my part, I should not have the smallest respect for the validity of an act if it could be proved that such identification had been neglected."

While his son was speaking, old Pigoult had been racking his memory. My father, by good luck, has a queer nervous twitch of his features, which was naturally aggravated under

the steady gaze of the certifier. On seeing this muscular movement, the old lawyer at last spotted his man.

"Ah, I have it!" he exclaimed. "Monsieur is the Marquis de Sallenauve—the man we used to call the *Grimacier*—who would, at this day, be the master of the Château d'Arcis if he had but married his pretty cousin, who had it for her marriage portion, instead of going off with the rest of the madmen as an *émigré*."

"Still a bit of a *sans-culotte*, it would seem," said the Marquis, laughing.

"Gentlemen," said the notary impressively, "the test I had planned seems to me to be decisive. This evidence and the papers which M. le Marquis has been good enough to submit to me, leaving them in my hands, together with the certificate of identity forwarded to me by Mother Marie des Anges, who is prohibited by the rules of her house from coming to my office, certainly justify us in completing the deeds which I have already prepared. One of them requires the signature of two witnesses. For one, we have here M. Bricheteau; for the other, my father, if you will accept him, and the honor, it seems to me, is his by right, for we may say he has won it at the point of his memory."

"Well, then, gentlemen, let us take our seats!" exclaimed Bricheteau enthusiastically.

The notary seated himself at his table; we made a semicircle, and he began to read the deeds. The object in view was set forth—to authenticate the recognition by François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenauve, of his son, in my person; but here a difficulty arose. Deeds under a notary's certificate must mention the place of residence of the contracting parties, otherwise they are void. Now, where did my father reside? A blank space had been left by the notary, who wished to fill it up before proceeding any further.

"In the first place," said Pigoult, "it would seem that M. le Marquis has no place of residence in France, since, in fact, he does not reside in the country, and has for many years owned no land in it."

"That is true," said the Marquis, in a graver tone than the remark seemed to call for; "in France I am but a vagabond."

"Aha!" said Jacques Bricheteau, "but vagabonds like you, who can hand over on the nail such gifts to a son as the sum needed to purchase a mansion, are not beggars we need waste our pity on. At the same time, what you say is true—equally true in France or elsewhere—for with your mania for eternally wandering it seems to me pretty difficult to name your place of residence."

"Well, well," said Achille Pigoult, "we will not be brought to a standstill by such a trifle as that.—Monsieur," and he turned to me, "is now the owner of the Château d'Arcis, for an agreement to sell is equivalent to a sale when the parties are agreed as to the terms and price. Then, what can be more natural than that the father's domicile should be stated as at one of his son's estates; especially when it is family property recovered to the original owners by purchase for that son's benefit, though paid for by the father; when, moreover, that father was born in the place where the said residence or domicile is situated, and is known and recognized by residents of standing whenever, at long intervals, he chooses to visit it?"

"Quite right," said old Pigoult, yielding without hesitation to the argument set forth by his son, in that emphatic tone peculiar to men of business when they believe they have laid their finger on a conclusive opinion.

"Certainly," said Jacques Bricheteau, "if you think the thing can be worked so——"

"You see that my father, a man of great experience, does not hesitate to support my opinion.—So we will say," added the notary, taking up his pen: " 'François-Henri-Pantaléon Dumirail, Marquis de Sallenauve, residing with M. Charles de Sallenauve, his natural son legitimized by this act, in the house known as the Château d'Arcis in the district of Arcis-sur-Aube, department of the Aube.' "—And the rest of the deed was read without any hitch.

Then followed a very ridiculous little scene.

All having signed, while we were still standing there, Jacques Bricheteau said:

"Now, M. le Comte, embrace your father."

My father opened his arms with no small indifference, and I coldly fell into them, vexed with myself, however, for not being more deeply moved or feeling in my heart the glow of kindred blood.

Were this coldness and dryness the result of my rapid increase of fortune?—At any rate, immediately after, by another deed which we had to listen to, I became, in consideration of a sum of a hundred and eighty thousand francs in ready money, possessor of the Château d'Arcis, a fine large house which I had noticed from afar, lording it over the country with quite a feudal air, though the prophetic voice of the proprietor was no more heard within me than that of blood relationship. The importance of this property as bearing on my election, even if I had not been instinctively aware of it, would have been made clear to me by a few words that passed between the notary and Jacques Bricheteau. After the manner of sellers, who will still run up the value of their goods even after they have parted with them:

"You may think yourselves lucky," said Achille Pigoult; "you have got that estate for a mere song."

"Stuff and nonsense!" retorted Bricheteau. "How long have you had it on your hands? To anybody else your client would have sold it for fifty thousand crowns, but as a family property you made us pay for the chance of having it. We shall have to spend twenty thousand francs in making it habitable; the ground will hardly return four thousand francs a year; so our money, including expenses, will not bring in two and a half per cent."

"What have you to complain of?" replied the notary; "you will have to employ labor, and that is not bad luck for a candidate."

"Ah, that election," said Jacques Bricheteau. "We will talk that over to-morrow when we come to pay over the money for the house, and our debt to you."

Thereupon we came away, and returned to the *Hôtel de la Poste,* where, after saying good-night to my father and his mouthpiece, I retired to my room to chat with you.

And now for the dreadful idea which drove away sleep and made me take up my pen again; I must tell you what it was, though, having relieved myself a little by writing these two pages, it does not seem to me so pressingly evident as it did just now. One thing at least is certain—everything that has come into my life during the past year is prodigiously romantic. You will perhaps say that adventures seem to form the natural current of my life; that my birth, the coincidence that threw us together with a strange similarity of fate, my position with regard to Marianina, and my handsome housekeeper, even my meeting and acquaintance with Mme. de l'Estorade, seem to suggest that I was born under a whimsical star, and that I am even now living under the influence of one of its vagaries. Absolutely true. Still, if at the same time, and under the same influence, I should be involved, without knowing it, in some diabolical plot of which I am being made the passive tool!

To give my ideas some little order, I will begin at that half million of francs spent, as you must allow, on a somewhat nebulous dream—that of one day possibly seeing me a Minister to some imaginary court heaven knows where, the name being carefully concealed. And who is it that lavishes such fabulous sums on me? A father tenderly devoted to the child of a lost love?—No—a father whose demeanor is absolutely cold, who goes to sleep while the balance-sheet, as it were, of our reciprocal relations is being read to me; for whom I on my part, and more's the pity, have no sympathy, whom I should, in fact, describe as an old owl of an *émigré,* but for the filial respect and affection I try to feel.—But now, I say, supposing this man were not my father, were not even the Marquis de Sallenauve, as he assumes to be; supposing that, like that luckless Lucien de Rubempré—whose story made such a noise at the time—I were wrapped in the coils of some serpent of the type of the sham priest Carlos Herrera, and to wake presently to the frightful truth!

"What possible chance is there of that?" you will say. "Carlos Herrera had an object in fascinating Lucien de Rubempré; but what hold can any one have over you, a man of principle, who have never looked for luxury, who have led a life of study and hard work?—and above all, what is to be got out of you?"

Well and good. But is the professed and apparent object of these men any clearer? Why does the man who recognizes me as his son conceal the name of the place he lives in, and that by which he himself is known in the unknown northern land where he is said to hold office? Why so little confidence and so many sacrifices on my behalf?—And does it seem to you that, in spite of his lengthy explanations, Jacques Bricheteau has satisfactorily accounted for the mystery in which he has wrapped my life? Why his dwarf? Why his impudent denial of his own identity the first time I addressed him? Why that frantic flitting?

All this, my dear fellow, whirling in my brain and culminating in the five hundred thousand francs paid over to me by the brothers Mongenod, seems to lend substance to a queer notion, at which you will laugh perhaps, but which is not without foundation in the annals of crime. As I said at first, I was invaded by it, and its suddenness seems to give it the character of an instinctive apprehension. One thing is certain: If I had had the most distant inkling of it last evening, I would have had my hand cut off sooner than sign that deed, binding up my life and fortunes with those of a stranger whose destiny may be as dark as a canto of Dante's *inferno,* and who may drag me with him into the blackest depths.

In short, this idea—while I am making you beat about the bush, not liking to be frank with you—is in its blank crudity just this: I am afraid lest I am unwittingly the agent of one of those associations of coiners who, in order to put their spurious currency into circulation, have been frequently discovered by justice in the act of conspiracies and schemes quite as complicated and inextricable as this with which I am now mixed up. In these trials we constantly see that the

accomplices make many and long journeys; they deal in bills drawn in remote spots on banks in important commercial centres, or in such capital cities as Stockholm, Rotterdam, or Paris. And we constantly find their unhappy dupes implicated in the case. Now in this man Bricheteau's mysterious proceedings, do you not detect a sort of imitation or mimicry of the manœuvres to which these ingenious criminals have recourse, using them with such talent and imaginative skill as romance-writers might long for?

As you may suppose, I have represented to myself every argument that can tell against this gloomy view of the case; and if I do not state them here, it is because I wish to have them from you, and so give them a value which they would cease to have if I had inspired them. Of one thing I am certain: I am living in an unwholesome atmosphere, thick and heavy; I want air, and I cannot breathe.

Still, if you can, reassure me, convince me; I shall be only glad, as you may well suppose, to find it all a bad dream. But, at any rate, no later than to-morrow I mean to have an explanation with both these men, and get a little more light on the subject than has as yet been vouchsafed me.

Here is a new aspect to the story. While I was writing I heard the clatter of horses in the street. Having grown distrustful, and inclined to take a serious view of every incident, I opened my window, and by the pale light of daybreak I saw at the inn door a post-chaise—horses, postilion, and all—ready to start, and Jacques Bricheteau talking to somebody inside, whose face was hidden by the peak of his traveling cap. I acted at once: I ran downstairs; but before I reached the bottom, I heard the dull clatter of wheels and the ringing cracks of the whip—a sort of parting song with all postilions.

At the foot of the stairs I stood face to face with Jacques Bricheteau.

Not in the least embarrassed, he said, with perfect simplicity: "What! up already, my dear boy?"

"Of course," said I, "the least I could do was to say good-bye to my most kind father."

"He did not wish it," said the confounded musician, with a cool solemnity that made me long to thrash him. "He was afraid of the agitation of a parting."

"He is in a devil of a hurry," said I, "if he could not spare one day to his brand-new paternity."

"What can I say? He is an oddity. He has done what he came to do, and he saw no reason to remain any longer."

"To be sure, the high functions he fulfils in that northern court——"

There could be no mistake as to the deeply ironical tone with which I spoke.

"Till now," said Bricheteau, "you have put more trust in us."

"Yes, but I confess that my confidence is beginning to be shaken by the ponderous mysteries that are so unmercifully and incessantly piled upon it."

"I should really be most distressed," said Jacques Bricheteau, "at seeing you give way, at this critical moment, to these doubts, which are certainly justified by the way you have been dealt with during so many years, if I had none but personal arguments or statements to countervail them. But you may remember that old Pigoult, last evening, spoke of an aunt of mine in these parts, and you will see before long that she is a person of considerable importance. I may add that her sacred dignity gives absolute authority to her word. I had arranged that we should see her in any case to-day; but give me only time to shave myself, and in spite of its being so early we will go at once to the Ursuline convent. You can then question Mother Marie des Anges, who is regarded as a saint throughout the department of the Aube, and by the end of the interview, I fancy, no cloud will hang between us."

All the time this strange man was talking his countenance was so unmistakably honest and benevolent; his language—always calm, elegant, and moderate—is so persuasive to his audience, that I felt the tide of my wrath ebbing and my confidence reviving.

In fact, the answer was final. The Ursuline convent, bless me! cannot be a mint for false coin; and if Mother Marie des Anges will answer for my father, as it would seem she has already done to the notary, I should be mad to feel any further doubts.

"Very well," said I, "I will go upstairs for my hat and wait for you on the bank of the river."

"Do so. And keep an eye on the door of the inn for fear I should make a bolt, as I did from the Quai de Béthune!"

The man is as clever as can be; he seems to read one's thoughts. I was ashamed of my distrust, and said that while waiting I would finish a letter.—This is it, my dear friend, and I must now close it and post it if it is to reach you in due time. Another day I will tell you of our visit to the convent.

Marie-Gaston to Madame la Comtesse de l'Estorade.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, *May* 6, 1839.

MADAME,—I should in any case have availed myself with pleasure of your commands that I should write to you during my stay here; but you have no idea how great was your kindness in grating me so precious a favor. But for you, madame, and the honor I may have of occasionally writing to you, what would become of me, a prey to the accustomed tyranny of my sad thoughts, in a town where there is no society, no commerce, no object of interest, no pretty environs, and where intellectual activity is limited to the production of pickled pork, soft soap, stockings, and cotton night-caps?

Dorlange, whom I shall not continue to call by that name—you shall presently learn why—is so much absorbed in the cares of his canvass that I scarcely ever see him. I told you, madame, that I was about to join our friend here in consequence of some disturbance of mind that I was aware of in a letter telling me of a great change in his life and prospects. I am now allowed to be more explicit on the subject—Dorlange at last knows his father. He is the natural son of the Marquis de Sallenauve, the last survivor of one of the oldest

families of this province. The Marquis, though giving no explanation of the reasons that led to his keeping his son's birth so profoundly secret, has just acknowledged him with every legal formality. At the same time, he has purchased for him an estate which had long since ceased to belong to the Sallenauves, and which will now again be a family possession. It is actually in Arcis, and it seems probable that it may be advantageous to the electoral schemes just now under discussion.

These schemes had their beginnings longer ago than we supposed, and they did not take their rise in Dorlange's brain. The Marquis began his preparations above a year since, by sending his son a large sum to enable him to acquire the necessary qualification by the purchase of a freehold; and it is with a view to smoothing the way to political advancement that he has given his son a name and title and property in this town.

What the ultimate purpose may be of such considerable expenditure the Marquis has never explained to Charles de Sallenauve; and it was this still hazy horizon to his sky that led the poor fellow to such apprehensions that, as a friend, I could do no less than hasten to alleviate them. The Marquis, in fact, seems to be as eccentric as he is wealthy; instead of remaining at Arcis, where his presence and his name might have contributed to the success he is so anxious for, on the very day after carrying out all the formalities required by the law, he set out privily for some distant country where he has, it would seem, some important function—not even giving his son the opportunity of bidding him good-bye. This coldness has a good deal embittered Charles' satisfaction; however, fathers must be taken as we find them, for Dorlange and I both live to prove that they are not to be had for the wishing.

Another whim of my Lord Marquis is having selected as his son's chief elector an old Ursuline nun, by a sort of bargain in which subsequently you, madame, were a factor. Yes; for the "Saint Ursula" for which you unawares were the

model will probably have no little influence over our friend's return to Parliament.

This is what happened. For many years Mother Marie des Anges, Superior of the Ursuline Sisters at Arcis-sur-Aube, had dreamed of erecting a statue of the patron saint in the convent chapel. But the Abbess, being a woman of taste and culture, would have nothing to do with the peddler's images of saints, sold ready-made by the dealers; on the other hand, she could not in conscience rob the poor of a sum so considerable as would pay for a work of art on commission. This excellent lady's nephew is an organist in Paris, and the Marquis de Sallenauve while he was traveling all over the world had confided his son to this man's care; for all these years his first object has been to keep the poor boy in absolute ignorance of his birth. When it occurred to him to make Sallenauve a deputy, Arcis was naturally thought of as the place where his family was still remembered, and every way and means was considered of making acquaintance, and utilizing all possible aids to his election.

Then the organist remembered his aunt's long-cherished ambition; he knew her to have influence in the district, where she is in great odor of sanctity, and also a touch of the spirit of intrigue, ever ready to rush into an affair that may be difficult and arduous. He went to see her with the Marquis de Sallenauve's concurrence, and told her that one of the most eminent of Paris sculptors was prepared to offer her a statue of the most masterly execution, if she, on her part, would undertake to secure his return as member for the district of Arcis at the next election.

The old Abbess did not think this at all beyond her powers. So now she is the proud possessor of the object of her pious ambition; it came safely to hand a few days since, and is already in its place in the convent chapel, where, ere long, it will be solemnly dedicated. Now it remains to be seen how the good Mother will perform her share of the bargain.

Well, madame, strange to say, all things weighed and con-

sidered, I should not at all wonder if this singular woman were to succeed. From the description given me by Charles, Mother Marie des Anges is a little woman, short but thick-set, with a face that still contrives to be attractive in spite of her wrinkles and the saffron-tinted pallor induced by time and by the austerities of a cloister. She carries the burden of a stout figure and seventy-six years with ease, and is as quick, bright, and spirited as the youngest of us. A thoroughly capable woman, she has governed her House for fifty years, and it has always been the best regulated, the most efficient, and at the same time the richest convent in the whole diocese of Troyes. No less well qualified for educating girls—the great end, as you know, of the Ursuline Sisterhoods—she has for the same length of time, through varying fortunes, managed a lay school which is famous in the department and in all the country round. Having thus presided over the education of almost all the daughters of the better families of the province, it is easy to understand that she has ubiquitous influence in the aristocratic circles of Champagne, for a well-conducted education always leads to permanent friendship between teacher and pupils. She probably knows very well how to turn these family connections to the best advantage in the contest she has pledged herself to engage in.

It would seem, too, that on the other hand, this remarkable woman can absolutely command all the democratic votes in the district. So far, indeed, on the scene of the struggle, this party has but a sickly and doubtful existence; still, it is by nature active and busy, and it is under that flag, with some little modifications, that our candidate comes forward. Hence, any support from that side is useful and important. You, madame, like me, will certainly admire the *bicephalous* powers, so to speak, of this old Abbess, who contrives at the same time to be in good odor with the nobility and the secular clergy, while wielding the conductor's stick for the radical party, their perennial foes. As a woman of admirable charity and enlightenment, regarded as a saint by the country folks, and the object of bitter persecutions during the Revolution,

enduring them with immense fortitude, it is easy to understand the position she holds among the higher and Conservative circles; but that she should be no less welcome to democrats and destructives seems almost incredible.

Her great influence over the popular party is based on a little contest she once had with them. About the year '93 that amiable faction proposed to cut her head off. Turned out of her convent, and convicted for having sheltered a contumacious priest, she was imprisoned, brought before the revolutionary tribunal, and condemned to the guillotine. The thing came to Danton's knowledge; he was then a member of the Convention. Danton had been acquainted with Mother Marie des Anges; he believed her to be the most virtuous and enlightened woman he had ever seen. On hearing of her sentence, he flew into a terrific rage, wrote a letter from his *high horse* to the revolutionary municipality, and commanded a respite with such authority as no man in Arcis would have dreamed of disputing. He stood up in the Tribune that very day; and after alluding in general terms to certain *sanglants imbéciles* whose insane folly was damaging the prospects of the Revolution, he explained who and what Mother Marie des Anges was, spoke of her wonderful gifts for the training of the young, and laid before the meeting a sketch for a decree by which she was to be placed at the head of a Great National Gynecæum, the details to be regulated by subsequent enactment.

Robespierre, who would have regarded the Ursuline nun's superior intelligence as an additional qualification for the scaffold, was not that day present at the sitting; the motion was carried with enthusiasm. As Mother Marie des Anges could not possibly carry out the decree thus voted without a head on her shoulders, she was allowed to retain it, and the executioner cleared away his machinery. And though the former decree, authorizing the Grand National Gynecæum, was presently forgotten, the Convention having quite other matters to occupy it, the good Sister carried it out on her own lines; and instead of something Grand, Greek, and National,

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with the help of some of her former associates she started a simple lay school at Arcis, to which, as soon as order was to some degree restored in the land and in men's minds, pupils flocked from all the neighboring country.

Under the Emperor, Mother Marie des Anges reconstituted her House, and her first act of government was a signal piece of gratitude. She decided that on the 5th of April every year, the anniversary of Danton's death, Mass should be said in the convent chapel for the repose of his soul.

To some who objected to this service for the dead—

"Do you know many persons," she would reply, "for whom it is more necessary to implore Divine mercy?"

After the Restoration, the performance of this Mass became a matter of some little difficulty; but Mother Marie des Anges would never give it up, and the veneration with which she was regarded even by those who were most set against what they called a scandal, ended in their making the best of it. Under the July Revolution, as you may suppose, this courageous perversity had its reward. Mother Marie des Anges is now in high favor at Court; there is nothing she cannot obtain from the most august persons in command; still, it is but fair to add that she asks for nothing, not even to help the poor; she finds the means of supplying most of their wants by her judicious economy in dealing with the funds of the community. What is even more obvious is that her gratitude to the great revolutionary leader is a strong recommendation to that party; this, however, is not the whole secret of her influence with them. The representative in Arcis of the extreme Left is a wealthy miller, named Laurent Goussard, who owns two or three mills on the river Aube. It was this man, formerly a member of the revolutionary municipality of Arcis, and a particular friend of Danton's, who wrote to that terrible Cordelier to tell him of the axe that hung over the Ursuline prioress' head, though this did not hinder that worthy *sansculotte* from purchasing a large part of the convent lands when they were sold as nationalized property.

Then, when Mother Marie des Anges was enabled to re-

constitute her Sisterhood, Laurent Goussard, who had not as it happened found the estate very profitable, came to the worthy Abbess and proposed to reinstate her in the former possessions of the Abbey. Laurent Goussard, a man with a keen eye to business, whose niece Mother Marie des Anges had brought up gratuitously (the young lady died in Paris in 1809), affected to make this a point of honor, offering to restore to the community the lands he had bought for the price he had paid for them. The good man was not making a bad bargain; the mere difference of value between silver and the assignats he had paid in was a handsome turn of profit. But Mother Marie des Anges, who had not forgotten that but for his intervention Danton could have known nothing, determined to do better than that for the man who had really saved her life. The Ursuline Sisterhood, when Laurent Goussard proposed this arrangement, was, financially speaking, in a flourishing position. Since its re-establishment it had come in for some liberal donations, and the Mother Superior had put away a considerable sum during her long management of the lay school; this she generously handed over for the use of the convent. Laurent Goussard was, no doubt, somewhat amazed when she spoke to this effect:

"I cannot accept your offer; I cannot buy at the lowest price; my conscience forbids it. Before the Revolution the convent lands were valued at so much; this is the price I propose to pay, not that to which they were brought down as a result of the general depreciation in value of all the nationalized lands. In short, my good sir, I mean to pay more—if that meets your views."

Laurent Goussard thought at first that he misunderstood her, or had been misunderstood; but when it dawned upon him that the Mother Superior's scruples of conscience would bring him a profit of about fifty thousand francs, he had no wish to coerce so delicate a conscience, and pocketing this godsend, which had really fallen from heaven, he made the astonishing facts known far and wide; and this, as you may suppose, madame, raised Mother Marie des Anges to such

estimation in the eyes of every buyer of nationalized lands, that she will never have anything to fear from any revolution. Personally, Laurent Goussard is her fanatical adorer; he never does a stroke of business or moves a sack of corn without consulting her; and, as she said jestingly the other day, if she had a mind to treat the Sous-préfet like John the Baptist, in a quarter of an hour Laurent Goussard would bring her that official's head in a sack. Does not that sufficiently prove, madame, that at a nod from our Abbess he will vote, and get all his friends to vote, for the candidate of her choice?

Mother Marie des Anges has, of course, a wide connection among the clergy, both by reason of her habit and her reputation for distinguished virtue; and among her most devoted allies may be numbered Monseigneur Troubert, the bishop of the diocese, who, though formerly an adherent of the *Congregation,* would, under the dynasty of July, put up with an archbishopric as preliminary to the cardinal's hat. Now if, to assist him in this ambition—justified, it must be said, by great and indisputable capabilities—Mother Marie des Anges were to write a few lines to the Queen, it is probable that his promotion would not be too long deferred. But it will be give and take. If the Ursuline Abbess works for the archbishopric, Monseigneur de Troyes will work the election. Nor will his share of the bargain be at all difficult, since the candidate in whom he is required to interest himself is a declared advocate of freedom in teaching, which is the only political principle for which the clergy care at this moment.

Winning the clergy almost certainly secures the Legitimist vote, for that party is no less passionately bent on freedom in teaching; and, out of hatred for the new (Orleans) dynasty, does not even take fright at seeing that principle in monstrous alliance with radical politics. The head of that party in this district is the family of Cinq-Cygne. The old Marquise, whose haughty temper and determined will are known to you, madame, never comes to the Château of Cinq-

Cygne without visiting Mother Marie des Anges, whose pupil her daughter Berthe formerly was—now the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse; as to the Duke, he will certainly support us, for, as you know, Daniel d'Arthez is a great friend of mine, and through Arthez we are certain to secure the interest of the Princesse de Cadignan, our handsome Duke's mother, so we may count on him.

If we now turn to a more obdurate party—the Conservatives, who must not be confounded with the Ministerialists—their leader is the Comte de Gondreville, your husband's colleague in the Upper Chamber. At his heels comes a very influential voter, his old friend, the former mayor and notary of Arcis, who in his turn drags in his train a no less important elector, Maître Achille Pigoult, to whom, on retiring, he sold his connection. But Mother Marie des Anges has a strong hold on the Comte de Gondreville through his daughter, the Maréchale de Carigliano. This great lady, who, as you are aware, is immensely devout, comes every year to the Ursuline Convent for a penitential retreat. Mother Marie des Anges says, moreover, though she gives no explanations, that she has a hold on the old Count through some circumstances known only to herself; and, in fact, this regicide's career—becoming a Senator, a Count of the Empire, and now a peer of France—must have led him through devious and subterranean ways, making it probable that there have been secret passages which he would not care to have brought to light. Now, Gondreville is one with Grévin, for fifty years his second self and active tool; and even supposing that by some impossible chance their long union should be severed, at least we should be sure of Achille Pigoult, Grévin's successor as notary to the Ursuline Sisterhood; indeed, at the time of the acquisition of the estate in Arcis by the Marquis de Sallenauve, which was effected through him, the purchaser took care to pay him a honorarium so large—so *electoral*—that he pledged himself merely by accepting it.

As to the ruck of the voters, our friend is certain to recruit a strong force, since he is about to give them employment

on the important repairs he proposes to begin at once; for the château, of which he is now the proprietor, is, fortunately, falling into ruin in many places. We may trust also to the effect of a magniloquent profession of principles which Charles de Sallenauve has just had printed, setting forth in lofty terms that he will accept neither favors nor office from the Government. And then the oratorical display we may look for at the preliminary meeting, which is already fixed; the support of the opposition papers in Paris as well as here; the abuse and calumny with which the ministerial papers have already opened fire—everything combines to make me hopeful. And there is a further consideration which seems to me final: It would surely not be strange if the good folks of Champagne, with a view to counteracting their reputation as Bœotians, should be eager to elect a man distinguished in art, whose masterpiece they have under their very eyes, who has made himself their fellow-townsman by purchasing an estate which has for ten years been in the market, and who is now about to restore the house, one of the finest in the province, to its former splendor, with prodigal disregard of cost.

After this voluminous essay on our military resources and movements, it hardly beseems me, madame, to complain of any want of mental occupation. I know not whether it is in consequence of the interest I feel in my friend, but I really believe that I have caught a touch of the electoral fever which is raging here; you may even think that this letter, crammed with local details, in which your utmost kindness will scarcely enable you to feel much interest, is a symptom of a terribly bad attack. Again, will you thank me, I wonder, for representing this man as likely to be seen ere long through the halo of parliamentary glory, when, only the other day, you were saying that it was not safe to make a friend of him, in view of his superhuman, and consequently rather aggressive pre-eminence?

To be quite frank, madame, whatever successes may await Charles de Sallenauve in his political career, I fear he may some day regret the calmer glory he would have achieved in

the realm of art, but neither he nor I was born under a tranquil star; we have paid dear for our very existence, and that you should not like us is doubly cruel. You have some kind feeling for me, because the fragrance still clings to me of our beloved Louise; have then some little regard for the man whom I have dared to speak of throughout this letter as *our* friend. If indeed, do what he will, he betrays a sort of insufferable greatness, should we not rather pity him than call him to a strict account? Do we not know, you and I, by cruel experience, that the noblest and most glorious lights are those which first sink into the extinction of eternal darkness?

Marie-Gaston to the Comtesse de l'Estorade.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, *May* 9, 1839.

MADAME,—You too have the election fever, and you have been good enough to transmit as a message from M. de l'Estorade a certain list of *discouragements,* which no doubt deserve consideration. I may however say at once that this communication does not seem to me to be so important as you perhaps think; and even before your official warning reached us, the difficulties in our course had not failed to occur to us. We knew already of the confidential mission undertaken by M. de Trailles, though for some days he tried, not very successfully, to disguise it under a pretence of commercial business. We even knew what you, madame, do not seem to have known, that this ingenious instrument of the ministerial mind had contrived to combine the care of his personal interests with that of party politics.

M. Maxime de Trailles, if we are correctly informed, was not long since on the point of sinking under the last and worst attack of a chronic malady from which he has long suffered. This malady is his Debt—for we do not speak of M. de Trailles' debts, but of his Debt, as of the National Debt of England. In *extremis,* the gentleman, bent on some desperate remedy, seems to have hoped for a cure in marriage—a marriage *in extremis,* as it might well be called, since he is

said to be very near fifty. Being well known—that is to say, in his case, much depreciated—in Paris, like tradespeople whose goods are out of date, he packed himself off to the country, and unpacked himself at Arcis-sur-Aube just as the fun of the election was beginning, wisely supposing that the rather uproarious tumult of this kind of political scrimmage might favor the slightly shady character of his proceedings. He calculated well; the unlooked-for death of young Charles Keller, who was first chosen as the ministerial candidate, threw the whole electoral district into great perturbation. M. Maxime de Trailles, fishing in these turbid waters, contrived to harpoon a candidate recommended by two very dissimilar kinds of merit and suitability.

From the point of view of public affairs, M. Beauvisage, whose name, madame, you will certainly remember, has the immense advantage of having thoroughly beaten and crushed the nomination of a little attorney named Simon Giguet, who, to the great indignation of the Government, wanted to take his seat with the Left Centre. This ousting of a pert upstart on the side of the Opposition was thought such an inestimable boon, that it led folks to overlook the notorious and indisputable ineptitude of this Beauvisage, and the ridicule which his return could not fail to bring on those who should vote for his election. On the private side of the question—that is to say, M. de Trailles' personal interest—M. Beauvisage has the great merit of owning an only daughter, tolerably pretty, who, without any exaggeration, it would seem, will bring her husband a fortune of five hundred thousand francs, amassed in the cotton night-cap trade, of which I spoke in such ribald terms in my last letter. So now the wire-pulling is all exposed to view. M. de Trailles had to ignite and feed an ambition and hope of sitting in the Chamber in the mind of a man who certainly would never have thought of it unaided; to insinuate that, in return for his help and disbursements, he meant, of course, to win the daughter and the dowry; to dazzle her by a made-up semblance of youth, by supreme elegance of manner, and by the title of Countess;

to begin carefully by seeming to hesitate between the daughter and the mother, and make a crowning display of disinterestedness and reformation by insisting that the settlements should protect the lady's fortune from his extravagance by every restriction the law can devise;—this was the task, the really herculean work, accomplished by M. de Trailles in less than a fortnight!

But then we appeared on the scene. We are of the province; Champenois by the name that dropped on us one morning from the skies; we make ourselves even more so by acquiring land in the district; and, as it happens, the country is bent at this election on sending no one to the Chamber but a specimen of its own vintage!—For that very reason you will say Beauvisage is certain to win; he is the purest and most unmitigated product of the soil.

So you might think, madame, but then we are not quite so idiotic as Beauvisage; we do not invariably make ourselves ridiculous; we do not indeed make cotton night-caps, but we make statues for which we have earned the Legion of Honor; religious statues, to be dedicated with much pomp in the presence of Monseigneur the Bishop, who will condescend to give an address, and of the municipal authorities; statues which the whole of the town—that part of it which is not admitted to the ceremony—is crowding to admire at the House of the Ursulines, who are vain enough of this magnificent addition to their gem of a chapel, and threw open their public rooms and oratory to all comers for the whole day—and this you may be sure tends to make us popular.

What contributes even better to this popularity is that we are not mean like Beauvisage, and do not hoard our income *sou* by *sou;* that we are employing thirty workmen at the château—painters, masons, glaziers, gardeners, trellis-makers; and that while the mayor of the town trudges shabbily on foot, we are to be seen driving through Arcis in an elegant open chaise with two prancing steeds, which our father—not in heaven, but in Paris—anxious to be even more delightful

at a distance than on the spot, sent hither post haste, with a view, I believe, to snuffing out M. de Trailles' tilbury and tiger. These, I may tell you, before our arrival were the talk of the town.

This evening, madame, to crown the great occasion of the dedication of the "Saint Ursula," we are giving a dinner to fifty guests at our château; and we have been so clever as to invite not only all the principal magnates of the neighborhood, but every official, permanent or temporary, without distinction. These last, now that we have announced our intention of standing for election, will, we know, certainly not accept. So much the better! there will be more room for those who do; and the defaulters, whose names will all be known to-morrow, will be caught in the very act of such flagrant servility and subserviency as will, we hope, strike a fatal blow to their influence.

Yesterday, madame, we drove out in our chaise to the Château of Cinq-Cygne, where Arthez introduced us to the Princesse de Cadignan. That woman is really miraculously preserved; she seems to have been embalmed by the happiness of her *liaison* with the great writer. "They are the prettiest picture of happiness ever seen," you said, I remember, of M. and Mme. de Portenduère; and you might say the same of Arthez and the Princess, altering the word "pretty" in consideration of their Indian summer.

From what I knew of a scene that took place, long ago now, at Mme. d'Espard's at the very beginning of that connection, I felt quite sure of not finding M. de Trailles in high favor at Cinq-Cygne; for, on that occasion, he had done his utmost to be offensive to Arthez; and Arthez, though content with making him ridiculous, regarded him with contempt; and that lofty and noble spirit can never get over that. On his first arrival here the ministerial envoy was met with some civilities at Cinq-Cygne; but he was no more than a floating stick—Arthez soon sent him to the bottom. One man, who flattered himself that he should find a fulcrum for intrigue at Cinq-Cygne, is now so entirely out of court that

it was from the Duc de Maufrigneuse—to whom M. de Trailles was so imprudent as to detail his schemes, as having known him at the Jockey Club—that I obtained the information set forth at the beginning of this letter, to be handed on to M. de l'Estorade if you will undertake the commission.

Mme. de Maufrigneuse and the old Marquise de Cinq-Cygne were wonderfully kind in their reception of Dorlange—Sallenauve, I should say, but I find it difficult to remember; as they are less humble than you are, they were not frightened at any loftiness they might meet with in our friend, and he, in an interview which was really rather difficult, behaved to perfection. It is very strange that after living so much alone, he should at once have turned out perfectly presentable. Is it perhaps that the Beautiful, which has hitherto been the ruling idea of his life, includes all that is pleasing, elegant, and appropriate—things which are generally learned by practice as opportunity offers? But this cannot be the case, for I have seen very eminent artists, especially sculptors, who, outside their studios, were simply unendurable.

I must here make a break, madame; I am at an end of my facts, and drifting into twaddle. To-morrow I shall have to give you an account of the great banquet, which will be more interesting than my reflections—philosophical and moral.

May 10.

The dinner is over, dear madame; it was a magnificent affair, and will, I fancy, be long talked of in Arcis. Sallenauve has in the organist—who, by the way, at the ceremony of the statue yesterday, displayed his exquisite talent on the good Sisters' organ—a sort of steward and factotum transcending all the Vatels that ever lived. He is not the man to fall on his sword because the fish is late. Colored lamps, transparencies, garlands, and drapery to decorate the dining-room, even a little packet of fireworks which had been stowed in the boot of the chaise by that surly and invisible father—who has his good side however—nothing was wanting to the festivities. They were kept up till a late

hour in the gardens of the château, to which the *plebs* were admitted to dance and drink copiously.

Almost all our guests appeared, excepting those whom we had asked merely to compromise them. The invitation was so short—a difficulty inevitable and pardonable under the circumstances—that it was quite amusing to see notes of excuse arriving up to the very dinner hour, for Sallenauve had ordered that they should all be brought to him as soon as they arrived. And as he opened each letter he took care to say quite audibly: "M. le Sous-préfet—M. le Procureur du Roi—The Deputy Judge—expresses his regrets at being unable to accept my invitation."

All these "refusals of support" were listened to with significant smiles and whispering; but when a note was brought from Beauvisage, and Dorlange read aloud that M. le Maire "found it impossible to *correspond* to his polite invitation," laughter was loud and long, as much at the matter as the manner of the refusal. It ended only on the arrival of a M. Martener, examining judge here, who showed the highest courage in accepting this dinner. At the same time, it may be noted that an examining judge is in his nature a divisible entity. As a judge he is a permanent official; all the change he can be subject to is that of his title, and the loss of the small additional salary he is allowed, with the right to issue summonses and catechize thieves, grand privileges of which he may be deprived by the fiat of the Keeper of the Seals. However, allowing that only half of M. Martener was bold, he was hailed like a "full moon."

In the presence of the Duc de Maufrigneuse, of Arthez, and, above all, of Monseigneur the Bishop, who is spending a few days at Cinq-Cygne, one absentee was much commented on, though his reply, sent early in the day, was not read to the company. This was the old notary Grévin. As to the Comte de Gondreville, also absent, nothing could be said; the recent death of his grandson Charles Keller prohibited his presence at this meeting; and Sallenauve, by making his invitation in some sort conditional, had been careful to suggest

the excuse; but Grévin, the Comte de Gondreville's right hand, who has certainly made greater and more compromising efforts for his friend than that of dining out—Grévin's absence seemed to imply that his patron was still a supporter of Beauvisage, now almost deserted. And this influence—lying low, in sporting phrase—is really of no small importance to us. Maître Achille Pigoult, Grévin's successor, explained, it is true, that the old man lives in complete retirement, and can hardly be persuaded to dine even with his son-in-law two or three times a year; but the retort was obvious that when the Sous-préfet had lately given a dinner to introduce the Beauvisage family to M. Maxime de Trailles, Grévin had been ready to accept his invitation. So there will be some little pull from the Gondreville party, and Mother Marie des Anges will, I believe, have to bring her secret thrust into play.

The pretext for the dinner being the dedication of the "Saint Ursula," an event which the Sisterhood could not celebrate by a banquet, Sallenauve had a fine opportunity at dessert for proposing a toast:

"To the Mother of the poor; to the noble and saintly spirit which for fifty years has shone on our Province, and to whom is due the prodigious number of cultivated and accomplished women who adorn this beautiful land!"

If you, madame, knew this corner of Champagne as well as I do, you would, when you read this sentence which I have transcribed with tolerable exactitude, exclaim at Sallenauve for a contemptible wretch, and wonder that the passion for power should make any man capable of such horrible enormities. And is it worth a man's while—a man usually so self-respecting—to find courage to tell a lie so great as to be almost a crime, when a mere trifle of which he had never once thought, which is no merit of his own, and of which all the credit must be referred to the fortuitous concourse of linked atoms, recommended him to the sympathy of the voters better than all the speeches in the world?

You yourself mentioned to me that your son Armand saw

a strong resemblance in Sallenauve to the portraits of Danton; it would seem that the remark is true, for I heard it on all sides, applied not to the portraits, but to the man himself, by guests who had known the great revolutionary well. Laurent Goussard, as the head of a party, had of course been invited. He was not only Danton's friend, he was in a way his brother-in-law; Danton, who was a scapegrace wooer, having paid his court for several years to one of the honest miller's sisters. Well, the likeness must in fact be striking; for after dinner, while we were drinking our coffee, the wine of the country having mounted a little to the good man's brain—for there had been no stint, as you may suppose—he went up to Sallenauve and asked him point-blank if he could by any chance be mistaken as to his father, and if he were sure that Danton had had nothing to do with the begetting of him.

Sallenauve laughed at the idea, and simply did a little sum:

"Danton died on April 5, 1793. To be his son I must have been born in 1794 at the latest, and should be five-and-forty now. Now, as the register in which my birth was entered—father and mother unknown—is dated 1809, that —and I hope my face as well—prove me to be but just thirty."

"Quite true," said Laurent Goussard, "the figures bowl me over. Never mind; we will get you in all the same."

And I believe the man is right; this whimsical likeness will be of immense weight in turning the scale of the election. And it must not be supposed that Danton is an object of execration and horror to the citizens of Arcis, in spite of the dreadful associations that surround his memory. In the first place, time has softened them, and there yet remains the recollection of a strong mind and great brain that they are proud of owning in a fellow-countryman. At Arcis curiosities and notabilities are scarce; here the people speak of Danton as at Marseilles they would speak of the Cannebière. So good luck to this likeness to the demigod, whose worship

is not confined to the town only, but extends throughout the suburbs and district.

These voters, *extra muros,* are sometimes amusingly artless; a little contradiction does not stick in their throat. Some agents sent out into the neighboring country have already made good use of this resemblance; and as in canvassing the rustics it is more important to strike hard than to strike straight, Laurent Goussard's explanation, apocryphal as it is, has gone the round of the rural hamlets with a precision that has met with no contradiction. And while this revolutionary parentage, though purely imaginary, is serving our friend well, on the other hand we say to those worthy voters who are to be caught by something at once more accurate and not less striking:

"He is the gentleman who has just bought the Château d'Arcis."

And as the Château d'Arcis towers above the town and is known to everybody for miles round, it is a sort of landmark; and at the same time, with a perennial instinct of reversion to old world traditions, less dead and buried than might be supposed.

"Oho! he is the lord of the château," they say, a free but respectful version of the idea suggested to them.

So this, madame, saving your presence, is the procedure in the electoral kitchen, and the way to dress and serve up a Member of the Chamber.

Marie-Gaston to Madame de l'Estorade.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, *May* 11, 1839.

MADAME,—Since you do me the honor to say that my letters amuse you, I am bound not to be shy of repeating them. But is not this a little humiliating? and when I think of the terrible grief which was our first bond of union, is it possible that I should be an amusing man all the rest of my days? Here, as I have told you, I am in an atmosphere that intoxicates me. I have made a passion of Sallenauve's

success, and being, as I am, of a gloomy and hopeless nature, an even greater passion perhaps of the wish to hinder the triumph of ineptitude and folly under the patronage of base interest and intrigue. Thank you, M. de Trailles, for the exhibition you have favored us with of your really burlesque father-in-law! For you have succeeded in interesting me in something; every now and then I laugh rather than rage; but at those moments, at any rate, I forget.

To-day, madame, the grotesque is paramount; we are on full parade. Notwithstanding M. de l'Estorade's discouraging warnings, we are led to suppose that the Ministry has not very exultant tidings from its agent; and this is what makes us think so: *We* are no longer at the *Hôtel de la Poste;* we have left it for our château. But, thanks to a long-standing rivalry between the two inns, *la Poste* and *le Mulet*—where M. de Trailles has his headquarters—we still have ample information from our former residence; and our host there is all the more zealous and willing because I strongly suspect that he had a hand, greatly to his advantage I should think, in arranging and furnishing the banquet of which I had the honor to send you full particulars.

From this man, then, we learn that immediately after our departure, a journalist from Paris put up at the hotel. This gentleman, whose name I have forgotten—which is well for him, considering how glorious a mission he bears—also announced that he came as a champion to lend the *vis* of his Parisian wit to the war of words to be opened on us by the local press, subsidized by the "office of public spirit." So far there is nothing very droll or very depressing in the proceedings; ever since the world began, Governments have been able to find pens for hire, and have never been shy of hiring them. Where the comedy begins is at the co-arrival at the *Hôtel de la Poste* of a damsel of very doubtful virtue, who is said indeed to have accompanied His Excellency the Ministerial newsmonger. The young lady's name, by the way, I happen to remember: she is designated on her passport as Mademoiselle Chocardelle, of independent means; but the journal-

ist in speaking of her never calls her anything but Antonia, or, if he yearns to be respectful, Mademoiselle or *Miss* Antonia.

But what has brought Mlle. Chocardelle to Arcis? A little pleasure trip, no doubt; or perhaps to serve as an escort to monsieur the journalist, who is willing to give her a share in the credit account opened for him on the secret service fund for the daily quota of defamation to be supplied by contract?—No, madame, Mlle. Chocardelle has come to Arcis on business—to recover certain moneys. It would seem that before leaving for Africa, where he has met a glorious death, young Charles Keller signed a bill in favor of Mademoiselle Antonia, an order for ten thousand francs, *value received in furniture,* a really ingenious quibble, the furniture having obviously been *received* by Mademoiselle Chocardelle, who thus priced the sacrifice she made in accepting it at ten thousand francs. At any rate, the bill being nearly due, a few days after hearing of the death of her debtor Mlle. Antonia called at the Kellers' office to know whether it would be paid. The cashier, a rough customer, as all cashiers are, replied that he did not know how Mademoiselle Antonia could have the face to present such a claim; but that in any case the Brothers Keller, his masters, were at present at Gondreville, where all the family had met on hearing the fatal news, and that he should not pay without referring the matter to them.

"Very well, I will refer it myself," said the young lady, who would not leave her bill to run beyond its date.

Thereupon, just as she was arranging to set out alone for Arcis, the Government suddenly felt a call to abuse us, if not more grossly, at any rate more brilliantly than the provincials do; and the task of sharpening these darts was confided to a journalist of very mature youth, to whom Mlle. Antonia had been kind—in the absence of Charles Keller!

"I am off to Arcis!" the scrivener and the lady said at the same moment; the commonest and simplest lives offer such coincidences. So it is not very strange that, having set out together, they should have arrived together, and have put up at the same inn.

And now I would beg you to admire the concatenation of things. Mlle. Chocardelle, coming here with an eye solely to finance, the lady has suddenly assumed the highest political importance! And, as you will see, her valuable influence will amply compensate for the stinging punishment to be dealt us by her gallant fellow-traveler.

In the first place, it appears that on learning that M. de Trailles was in Arcis, Mlle. Chocardelle's remark was:

"What! he here—that horrid rip?"

The expression is not parliamentary, and I blush as I write it. But it refers to previous relations—business relations again—between Mlle. Antonia and the illustrious confidant of the Ministerial party. M. de Trailles, accustomed as he is to pay his court only to ladies of position—who help to reduce his debt rather than to add to the burden—once in his life took it into his head to be loved not "for himself alone," and to be useful rather than expensive. He consequently bought a circulating library for Mademoiselle Antonia in the Rue Coquenard, where for some time she sat enthroned. But the business was not a success; a sale became necessary; and M. Maxime de Trailles, with an eye to business as usual, complicated matters by the purchase of the furniture, which slipped through his fingers by the cleverness of a rascal more rascally than himself. By these manœuvres Mlle. Antonia lost all her furniture, which the vans were waiting to remove; and another young lady—Hortense, also "of private means," and attached to old Lord Dudley—gained twenty-five louis by Antonia's mishap.

Of course, madame, I do not pretend to make all these details absolutely clear; they came to us only at second hand from the landlady of the *Poste,* to whom they were confided by Mademoiselle Antonia with more coherency and lucidity no doubt. At any rate, M. de Trailles and Mlle. Chocardelle parted on no friendly terms, and the young lady believes herself justified in speaking of him with the levity, the total absence of moderation, which will have struck you as it did me. In fact, since that first little outburst on her part, things

seem to have come to such a pass that M. de Trailles, in consequence of this or of other similar remarks, considered himself seriously compromised, and desired the journalist—whom he frequently sees, of course—to give his ready-tongued companion a "talking to." She, however, cared not a jot, and by the constant dropping of her sarcasms and anecdotes she is producing the effect, I will not say of a countermine, but of a *counter-Maxime,* which is a paralyzing check on the poisonous malignity of our terrible foe. The matter of the bill meanwhile hangs fire: she has twice been out to Gondreville, but was not admitted.

The journalist has much to do: to write his articles in the first place, and to do various small jobs for M. de Trailles, at whose service he is to be. Hence Mlle. Antonia is often left to herself, and, idle and bored as she is, so bereft of any kind of Opera, Ranelagh, Boulevard des Italiens, she has found for herself a really desperate pastime. Incredible as it seems, this amusement is not, after all, utterly incomprehensible, as the device of a Parisienne of her class exiled to Arcis. Quite close to the *Hôtel de la Poste* is a bridge over the Aube. Below the bridge, down a rather steep slope, a path has been made leading to the water's edge, and so far beneath the highroad—which, indeed, is not much frequented—as to promise precious silence and solitude to those who choose to go there and dream to the music of the waters. Mlle. Antonia at first betook herself to sit there with a book; but perhaps, from a painful association with the remembrance of her reading-room, "books," as she says, "are not much in her line"; and at last the landlady of the inn, seeing how tired the poor soul was of herself, happily thought of offering her guest the use of a very complete set of fishing-tackle belonging to her husband, whose multifarious business compels him to leave it for the most part idle.

The fair exile had some luck with her first attempts, and took a great liking for the pastime, which is evidently very fascinating, since it has so many fanatical devotees; and now the few passers-by, who cross the bridge, may admire, on the

banks of the Aube, a charming water-nymph in flounced skirts and a broad-brimmed straw hat, casting her line with the conscientious gravity of the most sportsman-like Paris arab, in spite of the changes of our yet unsettled temperature.

So far so good, and at present the lady's fishing has not much to do with our election; but if you should happen to remember in *Don Quixote*—a book you appreciate, madame, for the sake of the good sense and mirthful philosophy that abound in it—a somewhat unpleasant adventure that befalls Rosinante among the Muleteers, you will anticipate, before I tell you, the good luck to us that has resulted from Mademoiselle Antonia's suddenly developed fancy. Our rival, Beauvisage, is not merely a hosier (retired) and an exemplary mayor, he is also a model husband, never having tripped in the path of virtue, respecting and admiring his wife. Every evening, by her orders, he is in bed by ten o'clock, while Madame Beauvisage and her daughter go into what Arcis is agreed to call Society. But stagnant waters are the deepest, they say, and nothing could be less chaste and well regulated than the calm and decorous Rosinante in the meeting I have alluded to. In short, Beauvisage, making the rounds of *his* town—his laudable and daily habit—standing on the bridge, happened to remark the damsel, her arm extended with manly vigor, her figure gracefully balanced, absorbed in her favorite sport. A bewitching, impatient jerk as the fair fisher-maiden drew up the line when she had not a nibble, was, perhaps, the electric spark which fired the heart of the hitherto blameless magistrate. None, indeed, can tell how the matter came about, nor at what precise moment.

I may, however, observe that in the interval between his retirement from the cotton night-cap trade and his election as mayor, Beauvisage himself had practised the art of angling with distinguished skill, and would do so still but for his higher dignity, which—unlike Louis XIV.—keeps him from the shore. It struck him, no doubt, that the poor girl, with more good-will than knowledge, did not set to work the right way; and it is not impossible that, as she is temporarily under



his jurisdiction, the idea of guiding her into the right way was the origin of his apparent misconduct. This alone is certain: crossing the bridge with her mother, Mlle. Beauvisage, like an *enfant terrible,* suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, papa is talking to that Paris woman!"

To make sure, by a glance, of the monstrous fact; to rush down the slope; to face her husband, whom she found beaming with smiles and the blissful look of a sheep in clover; to crush him with a thundering "Pray, what are you doing here?" to leave him no retreat but into the river, and issue her sovereign command that he should go—this, madame, was the prompt action of Mme. Beauvisage *née* Grévin; while Mlle. Chocardelle, at first amazed, but soon guessing what had happened, went into fits of the most uncontrollable laughter. And though these proceedings may be regarded as justifiable, they cannot be called judicious, for the catastrophe was known to the whole town by the evening, and M. Beauvisage, convicted of the most deplorable laxity, saw a still further thinning of his reduced phalanx of followers.

However, the Gondreville-Grévin faction still held its own, till—would you believe it?—Mlle. Antonia once more was the means of overthrowing their last defences.

This is the history of the marvel. Mother Marie des Anges wished for an interview with the Comte de Gondreville; but she did not know how to manage it, as she thought it an ill-timed request. Having some severe remarks to make, it would seem, she would not ask the old man to visit her on purpose; it was too cruel an offence to charity. Besides, comminations fired point-blank at the culprit miss their aim quite as often as they frighten them; whereas observations softly insinuated are far more certain to have the desired effect. Still, time was fleeting; the election takes place to-morrow—Sunday, and to-night the preliminary meeting is to be held. The poor, dear lady did not know which way to turn, when some information reached her which was not a little flattering. A fair sinner, who had come to Arcis intending to get some money out of Keller, Gondreville's son-in-law, had

heard of the virtues of Mother Marie des Anges, of her indefatigable kindness and her fine old age—in short, all that is said of her in the district where she is, next to Danton, the chief object of interest; and this minx's great regret was that she dared not ask to be admitted to her presence.

An hour later, this note was delivered at the *Hôtel de la Poste:*—

"MADEMOISELLE,—I am told that you wish to see me, and do not know how. Nothing can be easier: ring at the door of my solemn dwelling, ask the Sister who opens it for me, do not be overawed by my black dress and grave face, nor fancy that I force my advice on pretty girls who do not ask it, and may one day be better saints than I am.

"That is the whole secret of an interview with Mother Marie des Anges, who greets you in the Lord Jesus Christ. ✠"

As you may suppose, madame, there was no refusing so gracious an invitation, and before long Mlle. Antonia, in the soberest garb at her command, was on her way to the convent. I much wish I could give you authentic details of the meeting, which must have been a curious one; but nobody was present, nor have I been able to hear what report of it was given by the wandering lamb, who came away moved to tears.

When the journalist tried to make fun of her converted airs:

"There, hold your tongue!" said Mlle. Antonia. "You never in your life wrote such a sentence!"

"What was the sentence, come?"

"'Go, my child,' said the good old lady, 'the ways of God are beautiful and little known; there is more stuff to make a saint of in a Magdalen than in many a nun.'"

And I may add, madame, that as she repeated the words the poor girl's voice broke, and she put her handkerchief to her eyes. The journalist—a disgrace to the press, one of those wretches who are no more typical of the press than a

bad priest is of religion—the journalist began to laugh, but scenting danger, he added, "And, pray, when do you mean really to go to Gondreville to speak to Keller, whom I shall certainly end by kicking—in a corner of some article—in spite of all Maxime's instructions to the contrary?"

"Am I going to meddle with any such dirty tricks?" asked Antonia, with dignity.

"What? So now you do not mean to present your bill!"

"I?" replied the devotee of Mother Marie des Anges, probably echoing her sentiments, but in her own words. "*I* try to blackmail a family in such grief? Why, the recollection of it would stab me on my deathbed, and I could never hope that God would have mercy upon me."

"Well, then, become an Ursuline and have done with it."

"If only I had courage enough, I should perhaps be happier; but, at any rate, I will not go to Gondreville.—Mother Marie des Anges will settle everything."

"Why, wretched child, you never left the bill with her!"

"I was going to tear it up, but she stopped me, and told me to give it to her, and that she would manage to pull me through by hook or by crook."

"Oh, very well! You were a creditor—you will be a beggar——"

"No, for I am giving alms. I told Madame the Abbess to keep the money for the poor."

"Oh, if you are going to be a benefactress to convents with your other vice of angling, you will be pleasant company!"

"You will not have my company for long, for I am off this evening, and leave you to your dirty job."

"Hallo! Going to be a Carmelite?"

"Carmelite is good," retorted Antonia sharply; "very good, old boy, when I am leaving a Louis XIV."

For even the most ignorant of these girls all know the story of la Vallière, whom they would certainly adopt as their patron saint, if Saint Louise of Mercy had ever been canonized.

Now, how Mother Marie des Anges worked the miracle

I know not, but the Comte de Gondreville's carriage was standing this morning at the convent gate; the miracle, be it understood, consisting not in having brought that old owl out, for he hurried off, you may be sure, as soon as he heard of ten thousand francs to be paid, though the money was not to come out of his purse but Keller's—it was the family's, and such misers as he have a horror of other folks spending when they do not think the money well laid out. But Mother Marie des Anges was not content with having got him to the convent; she did our business too. On leaving, the Peer drove to see his friend Grévin; and in the course of the day the old notary told a number of persons that really his son-in-law was too stupid by half, that he had got himself into ill odor through this affair with the Parisian damsel, and that nothing could ever be made of him.

Meanwhile, it was rumored that the priests of the two parishes had each received, by the hand of Mother Marie des Anges, a sum of a thousand crowns for distribution among the poor, given to her by a benevolent person who wished to remain unknown. Sallenauve is furious because some of our agents are going about saying that he is the anonymous benefactor, and a great many people believe it, though the story of Keller's bill has got about, and it would be easy to trace this liberality to the real donor. But when once the wind is favorable, it is difficult to trim the sails with mathematical exactitude, and you often get more way on than you wish.

M. Maxime de Trailles cannot get over it, and there is every probability that the defeat, which he must now see is inevitable, will wreck his prospects of marriage. All that can be said with regard to his overthrow is what we always say of an author who has failed—he is a clever man, and will have his revenge.

A very strange man, madame, is this organist, whose name, Bricheteau, is the same as that of one of our great physicians, though they are not related. It is impossible to have more energy, more presence of mind, more devotion and intelligence, and there are not two men in Europe who can play the organ

as he does. You, who wish Naïs to be something better than a *strummer,* should certainly get him to teach her. He is a man who would really teach her music, and he will not oppress you with his superiority, for he is as modest as he is gifted. He is Sallenauve's poodle—just as clever, just as faithful—I might say just as ugly, if a man with so good and honest a countenance could be anything but good-looking.

Marie-Gaston to the Comtesse de l'Estorade.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, *Sunday, May* 12, 1839.

MADAME,—Yesterday evening the preliminary meeting was held, a somewhat ridiculous business, and uncommonly disagreeable for the candidates; however, it had to be faced. When people are going to pledge themselves to a representative for four or five years, it is natural that they should wish to know something about him. Is he intelligent? Does he really express the opinions of which he carries the ticket? Will he be friendly and affable to those persons who may have to commend their interests to his care? Has he determination? Will he be able to defend his ideas—if he has any? In a word, will he represent them worthily, steadily, and truly?—This is the serious and respectable side of the institution, which, not being enjoined in any code, must have some good reason for its existence to have established itself so firmly as a matter of custom.

But every medal has its reverse; and on the other side we may see the voter at such meetings puffed up with arrogance, eager to display the sovereign authority which he is about to transfer to his deputy, selling it as dear as he is able. From the impertinence of some of the questions put to the candidate, might you not suppose that he was a serf, over whom each voter had the power of life and death? There is not a corner of his private life which the unhappy mortal can be sure of hiding from prying curiosity; as to merely stupid questions, anything is conceivable—as "Does he prefer the wines of Champagne to those of Bordeaux?"—At Bordeaux,

where wine is the religion, such a preference would prove a lack of patriotism, and seriously endanger his return. Many voters attend solely to enjoy the confusion of the nominees. They cross-examine them, as they call it, to amuse themselves, as children spin a cockchafer; or as of yore old judges watched the torture of a criminal, and even nowadays young doctors enjoy an autopsy or an operation. Many have not even so refined a taste; they come simply for the fun of the hubbub, the confusion of voices which is certain to arise under such circumstances; or they look forward to an opportunity for displaying some pleasing accomplishment; for instance, at the moment when—as the reports of the sittings in the Chamber have it—the tumult is at its height, it is not uncommon to hear a miraculously accurate imitation of the crowing of a cock, or the yelping of a dog when his foot is trodden on. Intelligence, which alone should be allowed to vote, having, like d'Aubigné—Mme. de Maintenon's brother—taken its promotion in cash, we cannot be surprised to find stupid folks among the electors, and indeed they are numerous enough in this world to have a claim to be represented.

The meeting was held in a good-sized hall, where an eating-house keeper gives a dance every Sunday. There is a raised gallery for the orchestra, which was reserved as a sort of platform, to which a few non-voters were admitted; I was one of these privileged few. Some ladies occupied front seats: Mme. Marion, the aunt of Giguet the advocate, one of the candidates; Mme. and Mlle. Mollot, the wife and daughter of the clerk of assize, and a few others whose names and position I have forgotten. Mme. and Mlle. Beauvisage, like Brutus and Cassius, were conspicuous by their absence.

Before M. Beauvisage presented himself for election, M. Simon Giguet, it would seem, was supposed to have a good chance; now, the appearance in the field of our friend Sallenauve, who in his turn has outstripped the mayor, leaves the lawyer two rungs behind. His father, an old Colonel of the Empire, is greatly respected in the neighborhood; and as a testimony of their regret at not being able to elect his

son, they unanimously voted him into the president's chair.

Giguet was the first candidate to address the meeting; his speech was long, a medley of commonplace; very few questions were put to him to be recorded in this report. Every one felt that the real battle was not to be fought here.

Then M. Beauvisage was called for. Maître Achille Pigoult rose and begged to be allowed to speak, and said:

"M. le Maire has been very unwell since yesterday——"

Shouts and roars of laughter interrupted the speaker.

Colonel Giguet rang the bell with which he had been duly provided for a long time before silence was restored. At the first lull, Maître Pigoult tried again:

"As I had the honor of saying, gentlemen, M. le Maire, suffering as he is from an attack, which, though not serious——"

A fresh outbreak, more noisy than the first. Like all old soldiers, Colonel Giguet's temper is neither very long-suffering nor altogether parliamentary. He started to his feet, exclaiming:

"Gentleman, this is not one of Frappart's balls" (the name of the owner of the room); "I must beg you to behave with greater decency, otherwise I shall resign the chair."

It is to be supposed that a body of men prefer to be rough-ridden, for this exhortation was received with applause, and silence seemed fairly well restored.

"As I was saying, to my regret," Maître Achille began once more, varying his phrase each time, "having a tiresome indisposition which, though not serious, will confine him to his room for some days——"

"Loss of voice!" said somebody.

"Our excellent and respected Mayor," Achille Pigoult went on, heedless of the interruption, "could not have the pleasure of attending this meeting. However, Madame Beauvisage, whom I had the honor of seeing but just now, told me, and commissioned me to tell you, that for the present M. Beauvisage foregoes the honor of claiming your suffrages, begging

such gentlemen as had expressed their interest in his election to transfer their votes to M. Simon Giguet."

This Achille Pigoult is a very shrewd individual, who had very skilfully brought about the intervention of Mme. Beauvisage, thus emphasizing her conjugal supremacy. The assembly were, however, too thoroughly provincial to appreciate this little dirty trick. In the country women are constantly mixed up with their husbands' concerns, even the most masculine; and the old story of the priest's housekeeper, who replied quite seriously, "We cannot say mass so cheap as that," has to us a spice of the absurd which in many small towns would not be recognized.

Finally, Sallenauve rose, and I was at once struck by the calm ease and dignity of his demeanor on the platform. This is a most reassuring promise for other and more serious occasions, for of one thing there can be no doubt—the character and quality of a man's audience have hardly anything to do with his sensations. To the speaker who has fear at his heels it is all the same whether he is addressing lords or louts. They are eyes to stare at him, ears to hear him; what he sees before him are not men, but one man—the meeting, of whom he is conscious as a mass, not analyzing it into elements.

After briefly enumerating the facts which tie him to the district, and alluding with skill and dignity to his birth, as *not being the same as most people's,* Sallenauve set forth his political views. He esteems a republic as the best form of government, but believes it impossible to maintain in France; hence he cannot wish for it. He believes that really representative government, with the politics of the *camarilla* so firmly muzzled that there is nothing to be feared from its constant outbreaks and incessant schemes, may tend largely to the dignity and prosperity of a nation. Liberty and Equality, the two great principles which triumphed in '89, have the soundest guarantees from that form of government. As to the possible trickery that kingly power may bring to bear against them, institutions cannot prevent it. Men and

the moral sense, rather than the laws, must be on the alert in such a case; and he, Sallenauve, will always be one of these living obstacles.—He expressed himself as an ardent supporter of freedom in teaching, said that in his opinion further economy might be brought to bear on the budget, that there were too many paid officials in the Chamber, and that the Court especially was too strongly represented.—The electors who should vote for him were not to expect that he would ever take any step in their behalf which was not based on reason and justice. It had been said that the word "impossible" was not French. Yet there was one impossibility that he recognized, and by which he should always feel it an honor to be beaten, namely, any infringement of justice or the least attempt to defeat the right. (Loud applause.)

Silence being restored, one of the electors spoke:

"Monsieur," said he, after due license from the chairman, "you have said that you will accept no office from the Government. Is not that by implication casting a slur on those who are in office? My name is Godivet; I am the town registrar; I do not therefore conceive myself open to the scorn of my respected fellow-citizens."

Said Sallenauve:

"I am delighted, monsieur, to hear that the Government has conferred on you functions which you fulfil, I am sure, with perfect rectitude and ability. But may I inquire whether you were from the first at the head of the office you manage?"

"Certainly not, monsieur. I was for three years supernumerary; I then rose through the various grades; and I may honestly say that my modest promotion was never due to favor."

"Well, then, monsieur, what would you say if I, with my title as deputy—supposing me to secure the suffrages of the voters in this district—I, who have never been a supernumerary, and have passed no grade, who should have done the Ministry no service but that of voting on its side—if I were suddenly appointed to be director-general of your department—and such things have been seen?"

"I should say—I should say, monsieur, that the choice was a good one, since the King would have made it."

"No, monsieur, you would not say so; or if you said it aloud, which I cannot believe possible, you would think to yourself that such an appointment was ridiculous and unjust. 'Where the deuce did the man learn the difficult business of an office when he has been a sculptor all his life?' you would ask. And you would be right not to approve of the royal caprice; for acquired rights, long and honorable service, and the regular progression of advancement would be nullified by this system of selection by the Sovereign's pleasure. And it is to show that I disapprove of the crying abuse I am denouncing; it is because I do not think it just, or right, or advantageous that a man should be thus raised over other men's heads to the highest posts in the public service, that I pledge myself to accept no promotion. And do you still think, monsieur, that I am contemning such functions? Do I not rather treat them with the greatest respect?"

M. Godivet expressed himself satisfied.

"But look here, sir," cried another elector, after requesting leave in a somewhat vinous voice, "you say you will never ask for anything for your electors; then what good will you be to us?"

"I never said, my good friend, that I would ask for nothing for my constituents; I said I would ask for nothing but what was just. That, I may say, I will demand with determination and perseverance, for justice ought always to be thus served."

"Not but what there are other ways of serving it," the man went on. "For instance, there was that lawsuit what they made me lose against Jean Remy—we had had words, you see, about a landmark——"

"Well," said Colonel Giguet, interposing, "you are not, I suppose, going to tell us the history of your lawsuit and speak disrespectfully of the magistrates?"

"The magistrates, Colonel? I respect them, which I was a member of the municipality for six weeks in '93, and I know

the law.—But to come back to my point. I want to ask the gentleman, who is here to answer me just as much as the others, what is his opinion of the licensed tobacco jobs."

"My opinion of tobacco licenses? That would be a little difficult to state briefly. However, I may go so far as to say that, if I am correctly informed, they do not seem to me to be always judiciously granted."

"Well done you! You are a man!" cried the voter, "and I shall vote for you, for they won't make a fool of you in a hurry. I believe you; the tobacco licenses are given away anyhow. Why, there is Jean Remy's girl—a bad neighbor he was; he has never been a yard away from his plough tail, and he fights with his wife every day of the week, and——"

"But, my good fellow," said the chairman, interrupting him, "you are really encroaching on these gentlemen's patience——"

"No, no; let him speak!" was shouted on all sides.

The man amused them, and Sallenauve gave the Colonel to understand that he too would like to know what the fellow was coming to. So the elector went on:

"Then what I say is this, saving your presence, my dear Colonel, there was that girl of Jean Remy's—and I will never give him any peace, not even in hell, for my landmark was in its right place and your experts were all wrong—well, what does the girl do? There she leaves her father and mother, and off she goes to Paris: what is she up to in Paris? Well, I didn't go to see; but if she doesn't scrape acquaintance with a member of the Chamber, and at this day she has a licensed tobacco shop in the Rue Mouffetard, one of the longest streets in Paris; whereas, if I should kick the bucket to-day or tomorrow, there is my wife, the widow of a hardworking man, crippled with rheumatism all along of sleeping in the woods during the terror of 1815—and where's the tobacco license she would get, I should like to know!"

"But you are not dead yet," said one and another in reply to this wonderful record of service. And the Colonel, to put an end to this burlesque scene, gave the next turn to a little pastrycook, a well-known republican.

The new speaker asked Sallenauve in a high falsetto voice this insidious question, which at Arcis indeed may be called national.

"What, sir, is your opinion of Danton?"

"Monsieur Dauphin," said the President, "I must be allowed to point out to you that Danton is now a part of history."

"The Pantheon of History, Monsieur le Président, is the proper term."

"Well, well!—History, or the Pantheon of History—Danton seems to me to have nothing to do with the matter in hand."

"Allow me, Mr. President," said Sallenauve. "Though the question has apparently no direct bearing on the objects of this meeting, still, in a town which still rings with the fame of that illustrious name, I cannot shirk the opportunity offered me for giving a proof of my impartiality and independence by pronouncing on that great man's memory."

"Yes, yes! hear, hear!" cried the audience, almost unanimously.

"I am firmly convinced," Sallenauve went on, "that if Danton had lived in times as calm and peaceful as ours, he would have been—as indeed he was—a good husband, a good father, a warm and faithful friend, an attaching and amiable character, and that his remarkable talents would have raised him to an eminent position in the State and in Society."

"Hear, hear! bravo! capital!"

"Born, on the contrary, at a period of great troubles, in the midst of a storm of unchained and furious passions, Danton, of all men, was the one to blaze up in this atmosphere of flame. Danton was a burning torch, and his crimson glow was only too apt for such scenes of blood and horror as I will not now remind you of.

"But, it has been said, the independence of the nation had to be saved; traitors and sneaks had to be punished; in short, a sacrifice had to be consummated, terrible but necessary for the requirements of public safety.—Gentlemen, I do not ac-

cept this view of the matter. To kill wholesale, and, as has been proved twenty times over, without any necessity—to kill unarmed men, women, and prisoners is under any hypothesis an atrocious crime; those who ordered it, those who allowed it, those who did the deeds are to me included in one and the same condemnation!"

I wish, madame, that I could adequately describe Sallenauve's tone and face as he pronounced this anathema. You know how his countenance is transfigured when a glowing thought fires it.—The audience sat in gloomy silence; he had evidently hit them hard, but under his strong hand the steed dared not rear.

"Still," he went on, "there are two possible sequels to a crime committed and irreparable—repentance and expiation. Danton expressed his repentance not in words, he was too proud for that—he did better, he acted; and at the sound of the knife of the head-cutting machine, which was working without pause or respite, at the risk of hastening his turn to lose his own, he ventured to move for a Committee of Clemency. It was an almost infallible way of expiation, and when the day of expiation came we all know that he did not shrink! By meeting his death as a reward for his brave attempt to stay the tide of bloodshed, it may be said, gentlemen, that Danton's figure and memory are purged of the crimson stain that the terrible September had left upon them. Cut off at the age of thirty-five, flung to posterity, Danton dwells in our memory as a man of powerful intellect, of fine private virtues, and of more than one generous action—these were himself; his frenzied crimes were the contagion of the age.

"In short, in speaking of such a man as he was, the justice is most unjust which is not tempered with large allowances—and, gentlemen, there is a woman who understood and pronounced on Danton better than you or I, better than any orator or historian—the woman who, in a sublime spirit of charity, said to the relentless, 'He is with God! Let us pray for the peace of his soul!' "

The snare thus avoided by this judicious allusion to Mother Marie des Anges, the meeting seemed satisfied, and we might fancy that the candidate was at the end of his examination. The Colonel was preparing to call for a show of hands when several voters demurred, saying that there were still two matters requiring explanation by the nominee—Sallenauve had said that he would always stand in the way of any trickery attempted by the Sovereign authority against National Institutions. What were they to understand by resistance; did he mean armed resistance, riots, barricades?"

"Barricades," said Sallenauve, "have always seemed to me to be machines which turn and crush those who erected them; nay, we are bound to believe that it is in the nature of a rebellion to serve, ultimately, the purpose of the Government, since on every occasion the police is presently accused of beginning it.—The resistance I shall offer will always be legal, and carried on by lawful means—the press, speeches in the Chamber, and patience—the real strength of the oppressed and vanquished."

If you knew Latin, madame, I would say, *"In cauda venenum,"* that is to say, that the serpent's poison is in its tail—a statement of the ancients which modern science has failed to confirm.

M. de l'Estorade was not mistaken: Sallenauve's private life was made a matter of prying inquiry; and, under the inspiration, no doubt, of Maxime, the virtuous Maxime, who had flung out several hints through the journalist intrusted with his noble plot, our friend was at last questioned as to the handsome Italian he keeps "hidden" in his house in Paris. Sallenauve was no more put out of countenance than he was in your presence and M. de l'Estorade's; he merely wished to know in return whether the meeting thought proper to waste its time in listening to a romance worthy to fill the space at the bottom of a newspaper. When a body of men are assembled together, madame, as your husband may have told you, they are like grown-up children, who are only too glad to hear a long story——

But Sallenauve has come in, and he tells me that the committee chosen by the constituents is such as to make his election presumably certain. So I put the pen in his hands; he himself will tell you the story of which you were cheated at his last visit, and he will close this letter.

Sallenauve to Madame de l'Estorade.

Seven o'clock in the evening.

MADAME,—The rather abrupt manner of my leave-taking when I bid you and M. de l'Estorade farewell, that night after our excursion to the Collège Henri IV., is by now quite accounted for, no doubt, by the anxieties of every kind that were agitating me; Marie-Gaston, I know, has told you the result. I must own that in the state of uneasy excitement in which I then was, the belief which M. de l'Estorade seemed inclined to give to the scandal he spoke of caused me both pain and surprise. "What," thought I to myself, "is it possible that a man of so much moral and common sense as M. de l'Estorade can *à priori* suppose me capable of loose conduct, when on all points he sees me anxious to give my life such gravity and respectability as may command esteem? And if he has such an opinion of my libertine habits, it would be so amazingly rash to admit me on a footing of intimacy in his house with his wife, that his present politeness must be essentially temporary and precarious. The recollection of the service I had so recently done him may have made him think it necessary for the time being, but I shall be dropped at the first opportunity."—And it occurred to me, madame, that evening, that the places assigned to us, perhaps ere long in hostile political camps, might be the pretext on which M. de l'Estorade would dismiss me, as it were, to what he called my shameless connection.

An hour or so before I observed these distressing signs, I had given you my confidence concerning a matter which might, at any rate, have preserved me from the mortification of finding that you had as bad an impression of me as M.

de l'Estorade. I did not, therefore, see any immediate need for justifying myself, and two long stories in one evening seemed to me too severe a trial for your patience.

As to M. de l'Estorade, I was, I confess, nettled with him, finding him so recklessly ready to echo a calumny against which I thought he might have defended me, considering the nature of the acquaintance we had formed, so to him I would not *condescend* to explain: this I now withdraw, but at the time it was the true expression of very keen annoyance.

The chances of an election contest have necessitated my giving the explanation, in the first instance, to a public meeting, and I have been so happy as to find that men in a mass are more capable perhaps than singly of appreciating a generous impulse and the genuine ring of truth. I was called upon, madame, under circumstances so unforeseen and so strange as to trench very nearly on the ridiculous, to make a statement of almost incredible facts to an audience of a very mixed character. M. de l'Estorade, in his own drawing-room, might have accepted them only as pending further evidence; here, on the contrary, they met with trust and sympathy.

This is my story, very much as I told it to my constituents at their requisition:

Some months before I left Rome, we received a visit almost every evening in the café where the Academy pupils are wont to meet from an Italian named Benedetto. He called himself a musician, and was not at all a bad one; but we were warned that he was also a spy in the employment of the Roman police, which accounted for his constant regularity and his predilection for our company. At any rate, he was a very amusing buffoon; and as we cared not a straw for the Roman police, we were more than tolerant of the fellow; we tempted him to frequent the place—a matter of no great difficulty, since he had a passion for *zabajon, poncio spongato,* and *spuma di latte.*

One evening as he came in, he was asked by one of our party who the woman was with whom he had been seen walking that morning.

"My wife, signor!" said the Italian, swelling with pride.

"Yours, Benedetto? You the husband of such a beauty?"

"Certainly, by your leave, signor."

"What next! You are stumpy, ugly, a toper. And it is said that you are a police agent into the bargain; she, on the other hand, is as handsome as the huntress Diana."

"I charmed her by my musical gifts; she dies of love for me."

"Well, then, if she is your wife, you ought to let her pose for our friend Dorlange, who at this moment is meditating a statue of Pandora. He will never find such another model."

"That may be managed," replied the Italian.

And he went off into the most amusing tomfoolery, which made us all forget the suggestion that had been made.

I was in my studio next morning, and with me certain painters and sculptors, my fellow-pupils, when Benedetto came in, and with him a remarkably beautiful woman. I need not describe her to you, madame; you have seen her. A cheer of delight hailed the Italian, who said, addressing me:

"*Ecco la Pandora!*—Well, what do you think of her?"

"She is beautiful; but will she sit?"

"Peugh!" was Benedetto's reply, as much as to say, "I should like to see her refuse."

"But," said I, "so perfect a model will want high pay."

"No, the honor is enough. But you will make a bust of me—a terra-cotta head—and make her a present of it."

"Well, then, gentlemen," said I to the others, "you will have the goodness to leave us to ourselves."

No one heeded; judging of the wife by the husband, all the young scapegraces crowded rudely round the woman, who, blushing, agitated, and scared by all these eyes, looked rather like a caged panther baited by peasants at a fair. Benedetto went up and took her aside to explain to her in Italian that the French signore wanted to take her likeness at full length, and that she must dispense with her garments. She gave him one fulminating look and made for the door. Benedetto

rushed forward to stop her, while my companions—the virtuous brood of the studio—barred the way.

A struggle began between the husband and wife; but as I saw that Benedetto was defending his side of the argument with the greatest brutality, I flew into a passion; with one arm, for I am luckily pretty strong, I pushed the wretch off, and turning to the youths with a determined air—"Come," said I, "let her pass!" I escorted the woman, still quivering with anger, to the door. She thanked me briefly in Italian, and vanished without further hindrance.

On returning to Benedetto, who was gesticulating threats, I told him to go, that his conduct was infamous, and that if I should hear that he had ill treated his wife, he would have an account to settle with me.

"*Debole!*" (idiot!) said the wretch with a shrug.

But he went, followed, as he had been welcomed, by a cheer.

Some days elapsed. We saw no more of Benedetto, and at first were rather uneasy. Some of us even tried to find him in the Trastevere suburb, where he was known to live; but research in that district is not easy; the French students are in ill odor with the Trasteverini, who always suspect them of schemes to seduce their wives and daughters, and the men are always ready with the knife. By the end of the week no one, as you may suppose, ever thought of the buffoon again.

Three days before I left Rome his wife came into my studio. She could speak a little bad French.

"You go to Paris," said she. "I come to go with you."

"Go with me?—And your husband?"

"Dead," said she calmly.

An idea flashed through my brain.

"And you killed him?" said I to the Trasteverina. She nodded:

"But I try to killed me too."

"How?" asked I.

"After he had so insult me," said she, "he came to our

house, he beat me like always, and then went out all day. The night he came back and showed me a pistol-gun. I snatch it away; he is drunk; I throw that *briccone* (wretch) on his bed; and he go to sleep. Then I stuff up the door and the window, and I put much charcoal on a *brasero,* and I light it; and I have a great headache, and then I know nothing till the next day. The neighbors have smell the charcoal, and have make me alive again—but he—he is dead before."

"And the police?"

"The police know; and that he had want to sell me to an English. For that he had want to make me vile to you, then I would not want to resist. The judge he tell me go—quite right. So I have confess, and have absolution."

"But, *cara mia,* what can you do in France? I am not rich as the English are."

A scornful smile passed over her beautiful face.

"I shall cost you nothing," said she. "On the contrary, I shall save much money."

"How?" said I.

"I will be the model for your statues; yes, I am willing. Benedetto used to say I was very well made and a very good housewife. If Benedetto would have agreed, we could have lived happily, *perche* I have a talent too."

And taking down a guitar that hung in a corner of my studio, she sang a *bravura* air, accompanying herself with immense energy.

"In France," she said when it was finished, "I shall have lessons and go on the stage, where I shall succeed—that was Benedetto's plan."

"But why not go on the stage in Italy?"

"Since Benedetto died, I am in hiding; the Englishman wants to carry me off. I mean to go to France; as you see, I have been learning French. If I stay here, it will be in the Tiber."

M. de l'Estorade will admit that by abandoning such a character to its own devices, I might fear to be the cause of

some disaster, so I consented to allow Signora Luigia to accompany me to Paris. She manages my house with remarkable ability and economy; she herself begged to stand as model for my Pandora; but you will believe me, madame, when I say that the corpse of Benedetto lay ever between his wife and me during this perilous test. I gave my housekeeper a singing master, and she is now ready to appear in public.

In spite of her dreams of the stage, she is pious, as all Italian women are; she has joined the fraternity of the Virgin at Saint-Sulpice, my parish church, and during the month of Mary, now a few days old, the good woman who lets chairs counts on a rich harvest from her fine singing. She attends every service, confesses and communicates frequently; and her director, a highly respectable old priest, came to me lately to beg that she might no longer serve as the model for my statues, saying that she would never listen to his injunctions on the subject, fancying her honor pledged to me. I yielded, of course, to his representations, all the more readily because in the event of my being elected, as seems extremely probable, I intend to part with this woman. In the more conspicuous position which I shall then fill, she would be the object of comments not less fatal to her reputation and prospects than to my personal dignity. I must be prepared for some resistance on her part, for she seems to have formed a sincere attachment to me, and gave me ample proof of it when I was wounded in that duel. Nothing could hinder her from sitting up with me every night, and the surgeon told me that even among the Sisters at his hospital he had never met with a more intelligent nurse or more fervid charity.

I have spoken with Marie-Gaston of the difficulty I anticipate in the way of this separation. He fears it, he says, even more than I. Hitherto, to this poor soul, Paris has been my house; and the mere idea of being cast alone into the whirlpool which she has never even seen, is enough to terrify her. One thing struck Marie-Gaston in this connection. He does not think that the intervention of the con-

fessor can be of any use; the girl, he says, would rebel against the sacrifice if she thought it was imposed on her by rigorous devotion. Also the worthy man had failed in his authority on a point on which he had far more right to speak loudly and decisively; she would not submit till I had released her from what she thought a strange pledge of honor to me.

Marie-Gaston is of opinion that the intervention and counsels of a person of her own sex, with a high reputation for virtue and enlightenment, might in such a case be more efficacious, and he declares that I know a person answering to his description, who, at our joint entreaty, would consent to undertake this delicate negotiation. But, madame, I ask you what apparent chance is there that this notion should be realized? The lady to whom Marie-Gaston alludes is to me an acquaintance of yesterday; and one would hardly undertake such a task even for an old friend. I know you did me the honor to say some little while since that some acquaintanceships ripen fast. And Marie-Gaston added that the lady in question was perfectly pious, perfectly kind, perfectly charitable, and that the idea of being the patron saint of a poor deserted creature might have some attractions for her.—In short, madame, on our return we propose to consult you, and you will tell us whether it may be possible to ask for such valuable assistance.

In any case, I beg you will be my advocate with M. de l'Estorade, and tell him that I indulge a hope of seeing not a vestige of the little cloud that had come between us.

By this time to-morrow, madame, I shall have met with a repulse which will send me back, once for all, to my work as an artist, or I shall have my foot set on a new path. Need I tell you that I am anxious at the thought? The effect of the unknown, no doubt.

I had almost forgotten to tell you a great piece of news which will be a protection to you against the *ricochet* of certain projectiles. I confided to Mother Marie des Anges—of whom Marie-Gaston had told you wonders—all my suspicions

as to some violence having been used towards Mlle. Lanty, and she is sure that in the course of no very long time she can discover the convent where Marianina is probably detained. The good woman, if she sets her heart upon it, is quite capable of success; and with this chance of rediscovering the original, the copy cannot surely fear my committing any misdemeanor!

I am not quite satisfied about Marie-Gaston; he seems to me to be in a state of feverish excitement as a consequence of the immense importance his friendship ascribes to my election. He is like an honest debtor who, having made up his mind to pay a sacred debt, puts everything aside, even his sorrows, till that is done. But I cannot but fear lest, after such an effort, he should have a relapse; his grief, though for the moment he suppresses it, has not really lost its poignancy. Have you not been struck by the light, sardonic tone of his letters, of which I have read portions? This is not natural. When he was happy he never had these bursts of turbulent gaiety. This cheerfulness is assumed for the occasion, and I greatly fear that when the electoral breeze dies away he will collapse into prostration, and slip through our fingers.

He has consented to stay with me on arriving in Paris, and not to go to Ville-d'Avray till I return, and in my society. Such prudence, though I begged it of him—with no hope of his consenting—alarms and troubles me. He is evidently afraid of the memories that await him there, and shall I be able to deaden the shock?—Old Philippe, whom he would not take with him to Italy, has been ordered to change nothing in the châlet, and from what I know of him, he is too well drilled a servant to fail in carrying out the order to the letter; thus the unhappy fellow, in the midst of all the objects that will speak of the past, will find himself back on the day after his wife's death. And there is a still more alarming fact! He has never once mentioned her to me, has never even allowed me to approach the subject. We

can but hope that this is but a crisis to be got over, and that by uniting to do our best we may succeed in calming him.

Adieu, then, till we meet, dear madame.—Conquering or conquered, I am always your most devoted and respectful servant.

Marie Gaston to the Comtesse de l'Estorade.

ARCIS-SUR-AUBE, *May* 13, 1839.

We have had a narrow escape, madame, while sleeping. And those blundering rioters, of whose extraordinary outbreak we have news to-day by telegraph, for a moment imperiled our success. No sooner was the news of the rising in Paris yesterday known, through the bills posted by order of the Sous-préfet, than it was cleverly turned to account by the Ministerial party.

"Elect a democrat if you will!" they cried on all sides, "that his speeches may make the cartridges for insurgent muskets!"

This argument threw our phalanx into disorder and doubt. Fortunately, as you may remember, a question—not apparently so directly to the point—had been put to Sallenauve at the preliminary meeting, and there was something prophetic in his reply.

Jacques Bricheteau had the happy thought of getting a little handbill printed and widely distributed forthwith:

"A RIOT WITH HARD FIGHTING TOOK PLACE YESTERDAY IN PARIS.

"Questioned as to such criminal and desperate methods of opposition, one of our candidates, M. de Sallenauve, at the very hour when those shots were being fired, was using these words"—followed by some of Sallenauve's speech, which I reported to you. Then came, in large letters:

"THE RIOT WAS SUPPRESSED; WHO WILL BENEFIT BY IT?"

This little bill did wonders, and balked M. de Trailles' supreme efforts, though, throwing aside his incognito, he spent the day speechifying in white gloves in the market-place and at the door of the polling-room.

This evening the result is known:—Number of voters, 201.

Beauvisage, ...	2
Simon Giguet, ...	29
Sallenauve, ...	170

Consequently M. Charles de Sallenauve is elected

MEMBER FOR ARCIS.

PART III.

THE COMTE DE SALLENAUVE

On the evening of the day following the election that had ended so disastrously for his vanity, Maxime de Trailles returned to Paris.

On seeing him make a hasty toilet and order his carriage as soon as he reached home, it might have been supposed that he was going to call on the Comte de Rastignac, Minister of Public Works, to give an account of his mission and explain its failure; but a more pressing interest seemed to claim his attention.

"To Colonel Franchessini's," said he to the coachman.

When he reached the gate of one of the prettiest houses in the Bréda quarter, the concierge, to whom he nodded, gave M. de Trailles the significant glance which conveyed that "Monsieur was within." And at the same moment the porter's bell announced his arrival to the man-servant who opened the hall door.

"Is the Colonel visible?" said he.

"He has just gone in to speak to madame. Shall I tell him you are here, Monsieur le Comte?"

"No, you need not do that. I will wait in his study."

And, without requiring the man to lead the way, he went on, as one familiar with the house, into a large room with two windows opening on a level with the garden. This study, like the Bologna lute included in the *Avare's* famous inventory, was "fitted with all its strings, or nearly all"; in other words, all the articles of furniture which justified its designation, such as a writing-table, book-cases, maps, and globes, were there, supplemented by other and very handsome furniture; but the Colonel, an ardent sportsman, and one of the most energetic members of the Jockey Club, had

by degrees allowed this sanctuary of learning and science to be invaded by the appurtenances of the smoking-room, the fencing-school, and the harness-room. Pipes and weapons of every form, from every land, including the Wild Indian's club, saddles, hunting-crops, bits and stirrups of every pattern, fencing-gloves, and boxing-gloves, lay in strange and disorderly confusion. However, by thus surrounding himself with the accessories of his favorite occupations and *studies,* the Colonel showed that he had the courage of his opinions. In fact, in his opinion no reading was endurable for more than a quarter of an hour, unless indeed it were the *Stud-journal.*

It must be supposed, however, that politics had made their way into his life, devoted as it was to the worship of muscular development and equine science, for Maxime found strewn on the floor most of the morning's papers, flung aside with contempt when the Colonel had looked them through. From among the heap M. de Trailles picked up the *National,* and his eye at once fell on these lines, forming a short paragraph on the front page:

"Our side has secured a great success in the district of Arcis-sur-Aube. In spite of the efforts of local functionaries, supported by those of a special agent sent by the Government to this imperiled outpost, the Committee is almost entirely composed of the adherents of the most advanced Left. We may therefore quite confidently predict the election to-morrow of M. Dorlange, one of our most distinguished sculptors, a man whom we have warmly recommended to the suffrages of our readers. They will not be surprised at seeing him returned, not under the name of Dorlange, but as Monsieur Charles de Sallenauve.

"By an act of recognition, signed and witnessed on May 2nd, at the office of Maître Achille Pigoult, notary at Arcis, M. Dorlange is authorized to take and use the name of one of the best families in Champagne, to which he did not till then know that he belonged. But Dorlange or Sallenauve,

the new member is one of Us, a fact of which the Government will ere long be made aware in the Chamber. As we read the eloquent utterances of this candidate when addressing the preliminary meeting, without flattery and quite apart from party feeling, we may predict his brilliant success on the parliamentary platform."

Maxime tossed the sheet aside with petulant annoyance and picked up another. This was an organ of the Legitimist party. In it he read under the heading of Elections:

"The staff of the National Guard and the Jockey Club, who had several members in the last Chamber of Deputies, have just sent one of their most brilliant notables to the newly-elected Parliament, of which the first session is about to open. Colonel Franchessini, so well known for his zealous prosecution of National Guards who shirk service, was elected almost unanimously for one of the rotten boroughs of the Civil List. It is supposed that he will take his seat with the phalanx of the Aides-de-Camp, and that in the Chamber, as in the office of the Staff, he will be a firm and ardent supporter of the policy of the *Status quo.*"

As Maxime got to the end of this paragraph, the Colonel came in.

Colonel Franchessini, for a short time in the Imperial Army, had, under the Restoration, figured as a dashing officer; but in consequence of some little clouds that had tarnished the perfect brightness of his honor, he had been compelled to resign his commission, so that in 1830 he was quite free to devote himself with passionate ardor to the "dynasty of July." He had not, however, re-entered the service, because, not long after his little misadventure, he had found great consolation from an immensely rich Englishwoman who had allowed herself to be captivated by his handsome face and figure, at that time worthy of Antinous, and had annexed him as her husband. He had ultimately resumed his epaulettes as

a member of the Staff of the Citizen Militia. He had revealed himself in that position as the most turbulent and contentious of swashbucklers, and by the aid of the extensive connections secured to him by his wealth and this influential position, he had now pushed his way—the news was correct—into a seat in the Chamber.

Colonel Franchessini, like his friend Maxime de Trailles nearly fifty years of age, had an air of second youth, for which his lightly-knit frame and agile military figure promised long duration. Though he had finally made up his mind to iron-gray hair, concealing the silver sheen by keeping it cut very short, he was less resigned to a white moustache; wearing it turned up with a jaunty and juvenile curl, he did his best to preserve its original hue by the use of *Pomade Hongroise*. But those who try to prove too much prove nothing; and in the application of this black dye, art exaggerating nature was betrayed by an intensity and equality of hue too perfect to be thought genuine. This gave his strongly marked countenance, with its dark complexion and conspicuous stamp of the Italian origin indicated by his name, a strangely hard-set expression, which was far from being corrected or softened by angular features, piercing eyes, and a large nose like the beak of a bird of prey.

"Well, Maxime," said he, holding out a hand to his expectant visitor, "where the devil do you come from? We have not seen a sign of you at the club this fortnight past."

"Where have I come from?" repeated Monsieur de Trailles. "I will tell you.—But first let me congratulate you."

"Yes," said the Colonel airily, "they took it into their heads to elect me. On my word, I am very innocent of it all; if no one had worked any harder for it than I——"

"My dear fellow, you are a man of gold for any district, and if only the voters I have had to deal with had been equally intelligent——"

"What, have you been standing for a place? But from the state—the somewhat entangled state—of your finances I did not think you were in a position——"

"No; and I was not working on my own account. Rastignac was worried about the voting in Arcis-sur-Aube, and asked me to spend a few days there."

"Arcis-sur-Aube! But, my dear fellow, if I remember rightly some article I was reading this morning in one of those rags, they are making a shocking bad choice—some plaster-cast maker, an image-cutter, whom they propose to send up to us?"

"Just so, and it is about that rascally business that I came to consult you. I have not been two hours in Paris, and I shall see Rastignac only as I leave this."

"He is getting on famously, that little Minister!" said the Colonel, interrupting the skilful modulation through which Maxime by every word had quietly tended to the object of his visit. "He is very much liked at the *Château*.—Do you know that little Nucingen girl he married?"

"Yes, I often see Rastignac; he is a very old friend of mine."

"She is a pretty little thing," the Colonel went on. "Very pretty; and when the first year of matrimony is dead and buried, I fancy that a mild charge in that quarter might be ventured on with some hope of success."

"Come, come!" said Maxime, "a man of position like you, a legislator! Why, after merely stirring the electoral pot for somebody else, I have come back quite a settled and reformed character."

"Then you went to Arcis-sur-Aube to hinder the election of this hewer of stone?"

"Not at all; I went there to scotch the wheels of a Left Centre candidate."

"Peugh! I am not sure that it is not as bad as the Left out and out.—But take a cigar; I have some good ones there—the same as the Princes smoke."

Maxime would have gained nothing by refusing, for the Colonel had already risen to ring for his valet, to whom he merely said: "Lights."

Their cigars fairly started, M. de Trailles anticipated an-

other interruption by declaring, before he was asked, that he had never smoked anything so fine. The Colonel, lounging comfortably in his chair, and, so to say, ballasted by the occupation he had secured, seemed likely to give less volatile attention to the conversation. So M. de Trailles resumed:

"At first everything was going splendidly. To oust the candidate who had scared the Ministry—a lawyer, the very worst kind of vermin—I disinterred a retired hosier, the mayor of the town, idiot enough for anything, whom I persuaded to come forward. This worthy was convinced that he, like his opponent, belonged to the Opposition. That is the prevalent opinion in the whole district at the present time, so that the election, by my judicious manœuvring, was as good as won. And our man once safe in Paris, the great wizard at the Tuileries would have spoken three words to him, and this rabid antagonist, turned inside out like a stocking of his own making, would have been anything we wished."

"Well played," said the Colonel; "I see the hand of my Maxime in it all."

"You will see it yet plainer when he tells you that in this little arrangement, without taking toll from his employers, he expected to turn an honest penny. To engraft on that dull stock some sort of parliamentary ambition, I had to begin by making myself agreeable to his wife, a not unpalatable country matron, though a little past the prime——"

"Yes, yes; very good——" said Franchessini. "The husband a deputy—satisfied——?"

"You are not near it, my dear fellow. There is a daughter in the house, an only child, very much spoilt, nineteen, nice-looking, and with something like a million francs of her own."

"But, my dear Maxime, I passed by your tailor's yesterday and your coachmaker's, and I saw no illuminations."

"They would, I am sorry to say, have been premature.—But so matters stood: the two ladies crazy to make a move to Paris; full of overflowing gratitude to the man who could get them there through the door of the Palais Bourbon; the

girl possessed with the idea of being a Countess; the mother transported at the notion of holding a political drawing-room—you see all the obvious openings that the situation afforded, and you know me well enough to believe that I was not behindhand to avail myself of such possibilities when once I had discerned them."

"I am quite easy on that score," said the Colonel, as he opened a window to let out some of the cigar smoke that by this time was filling the room.

"So I was fully prepared," Maxime went on, "to swallow the damsel and the fortune as soon as I had made up my mind to leap plump into this *mésalliance;* when, falling from the clouds, or to be accurate, shot up from underground, the gentleman with two names, of whom you read in the *National* this morning, suddenly came on the scene."

"By the way," said the Colonel, "what may this act of recognition be which enables a man to take a name he had never heard of only a day since?"

"The recognition of a natural son in the presence of a notary.—It is perfectly legal."

"Then our gentleman is of the interesting tribe of the nameless? Yes, yes, those rascals often have great luck. I am not at all surprised that this one should have cut the ground from under your feet."

"If we were living in the middle ages," said Maxime, "I should account for the unhorsing of my man and the success of this fellow by magic and witchcraft; for he will, I fear, be your colleague. How can you account for the fact that an old *tricoteuse,* formerly a friend of Danton's, and now the Mother Superior of an Ursuline convent, with the help of a nephew, an obscure Paris organist whom she brought out as the masculine figure-head of her scheme, should have hoodwinked a whole constituency to such a point that this stranger actually polled an imposing majority?"

"Well, but some one knew him, I suppose?"

"Not a soul, unless it were this old hypocrite. Till the moment of his arrival he had no fortune, no connections—not

even a father! While he was taking his boots off he was made —Heaven knows how—the proprietor of a fine estate. Then, in quite the same vein, a gentleman supposed to be a native of the place, from which he had absented himself for many years, presented himself with this ingenious schemer in a notary's office, acknowledged him post-haste as his son, and vanished again in the course of the night, no one knowing by which road he went. This trick having come off all right, the Ursuline and her ally launched their nominee; republicans, legitimists, and conservatives, the clergy, the nobility, the middle classes—one and all, as if bound by a spell cast over the whole land, came round to this favorite of the old nun-witch; and, but for the sacred battalion of officials who, under my eye, put a bold face on the matter, and did not break up, there was nothing to hinder his being returned unanimously, as you were."

"And so, my poor friend, good-bye to the fortune?"

"Well, not so bad as that. But everything is put off.—The father complains that the blissful peace of his existence is broken, that he has been made quite ridiculous—when the poor man is so utterly ridiculous to begin with. The daughter would still like to be a Countess, but the mother cannot make up her mind to see her political drawing-room carried down stream; God knows to what lengths I may have to go in consolation! Then, I myself am worried by the need for coming to an early solution of the problem. There I was—there was the girl—I should have got married; I should have taken a year to settle my affairs, and then by next session, I should have made my respectable father-in-law resign, and have stepped into his seat in the Chamber.—You see what a horizon lay before me."

"But, my dear fellow, apart from the political horizon, that million must not be allowed to slip."

"Oh well, so far as that goes, I am easy; it is only postponed. My good people are coming to Paris. After the repulse they have sustained, Arcis is no longer a possible home for them. Beauvisage particularly—I apologize for the

name, but it is that of my fair one's family—Beauvisage, like Coriolanus, is ready to put the ungrateful province to fire and sword.—And indeed the hapless exiles will have a place here to lay their heads, for they are the owners, if you please, of the Hôtel Beauséant."

"Owners of the Hôtel Beauséant!" cried the Colonel in amazement.

"Yes indeed; and, after all—Beauséant—Beauvisage; only the end of the name needs a change.—My dear fellow, you have no idea of what these country fortunes mount up to, accumulated sou by sou, especially when the omnipotence of thrift is supported by the incessant suction of the leech we call trade! We must make the best of it; the middle classes are rising steadily like a tide, and it is really very kind of them to buy our houses and lands instead of cutting our heads off, as they did in '93 to get them for nothing."

"But you, my dear Maxime, have reduced your houses and lands to the simplest expression."

"No—since, as you perceive, I am thinking of reinstating myself."

"The Hôtel Beauséant!" said the Colonel, calling up a long-buried reminiscence. "I have never set foot there since the last ball given by the Viscountess who then owned it, on the very evening when, in love and despair, she made up her mind to go and bury herself in Normandy on one of her estates. I was there with poor Lady Brandon, and the effect was startling; but I remember the splendor of the rooms; it was quite a royal residence."

"Happily, everything has been completely spoilt. It was let for years to some English people, and now extensive repairs are needed. This is a capital bond between me and my country friends, for without me they have no idea how to set to work. It is understood that I am to be director general of the works; but I have promised my future mother-in-law another thing, and I need your assistance, my dear fellow, to enable me to perform it."

"You do not want a license for her to sell tobacco and stamps?"

"No, nothing so difficult as that.—These confounded women, when they are possessed by a spirit of hatred or revenge, have really wonderful instinct; and Madame Beauvisage, who roars like a lioness at the mere name of Dorlange, has taken it into her head that there must be some dirty intrigue wriggling at the bottom of his incomprehensible success. It is quite certain that the apparition and disappearance of this 'American' father give grounds for very odd surmises; and it is quite possible that if we pressed the button, the organist, who is said to have taken entire charge of this interesting bastard's education, and to know the secret of his parentage, might afford the most unexpected revelations.

"And thinking of this, I remembered a man over whom you have, I fancy, considerable influence, and who in this 'Dorlange hunt' may be of great use to us. You recollect the robbery of Jenny Cadine's jewels, which she lamented so bitterly one evening when supping with you at Véry's? You called to the waiter for paper and ink; and in obedience to a line from you, sent at three in the morning to M. de Saint-Estève, the police took up the matter so effectively that the thieves were caught and the jewels restored by the following evening."

"Yes," said the Colonel, "I remember very well. My audacity was lucky. But I may tell you frankly, that with more time for thought, I should not have dealt so cavalierly with Monsieur de Saint-Estève. He is a man to be approached with respect."

"Bless me! Why, is not he a retired criminal who has served his time on the hulks, and whose release you helped to obtain—who must have for you some such veneration as Fieschi showed to one of his protectors?"

"Very true. Monsieur de Saint-Estève, like his predecessor Bibi-Lupin, has had his troubles. But he is now at the head of the criminal police, with very important functions that he fulfils with remarkable address. If this were a matter strictly within his department, I should not hesitate to give you an introduction; but the affair of which you speak is a

delicate business, and first and foremost I must feel my way to ascertain whether he will even discuss it with you."

"Oh, I fancied he was entirely at your commands. Say no more about it if there is any difficulty."

"The chief difficulty is that I never see him. I cannot, of course, write to him about such a thing; I lack opportunity—the chance of a meeting.—But why not apply to Rastignac, who would simply order him to take steps?"

"Rastignac, as you may understand, will not give me a very good reception. I had promised to succeed, and I have come back a failure; he will regard this side issue as one of those empty dreams a man clutches at to conceal a defeat. And, in any case, I should be glad to owe such a service solely to your tried friendship."

"It will not prove lacking," said the Colonel, rising. "I will do my best for you, only it will take time."

Maxime had paid a long visit, and took the hint to cut it short; he took leave with a shade of coolness, which did not particularly disturb the Colonel.

As soon as Monsieur de Trailles was gone, Franchessini took the knave of spades out of a pack of cards, and cut the figure out from the background. Placed between two thick folds of letter-paper, he tucked it into an envelope, which he addressed in a feigned hand to Monsieur de Saint-Estève, Petite Rue Sainte-Anne, Près du Quai des Orfèvres.

This done, he rang, countermanded his carriage, which he had ordered before Maxime's visit, and setting out on foot, posted the strange missive with his own hand in the first letter-box he came to. He took particular care to see that it was securely sealed.

At the close of the elections, which were now over, the Government, against all expectations, still had a majority in the Chamber, but a problematical and provisional majority, promising but a struggling and sickly existence to the Ministry in power. Still, it had won the numerical success which is held to be satisfactory by men who wish to remain in

office at any price. Every voice in the Ministerial camp was raised in a *Te Deum,* which as often serves to celebrate a doubtful defeat as an undoubted victory.

On the evening of the day when Colonel Franchessini and Maxime de Trailles had held the conversation just recorded, the general result of the elections was known; the ministers living on the left bank of the Seine who held receptions that day saw their rooms mobbed; and at the house of the Minister of Public Works, the Comte de Rastignac, the throng was immense. Though not conspicuous as an orator, this diminutive statesman, by his dexterity, by the elegance of his manners, by his inexhaustible fund of resource, and, above all, by his complete devotion to personal policy, was sure to rise to a post of the first importance in a Cabinet which lived only by expedients.

Madame de l'Estorade, who was too much taken up by her children to be very punctual in her social duties, had long owed Madame de Rastignac a visit in return for that paid by the Minister's wife on the evening when the sculptor, now promoted to be deputy, had dined there after the famous occasion of the statuette, as related by her to Madame Octave de Camps. Monsieur de l'Estorade, a zealous Conservative, as we know, had insisted that, on a day when politics and politeness were both on the same side, his wife should discharge this debt already of long standing. Madame de l'Estorade had gone early to have done with the task as soon as possible, and so found herself at the upper end of the group of seated ladies; while the men stood about, talking. Her chair was next to Madame de Rastignac, who sat nearest to the fire. At official receptions this is usual, a sort of guide to the newcomers who know where to go at once to make their bow to the lady of the house.

But Madame de l'Estorade's hopes of curtailing her visit had not taken due account of the fascinations of conversation in which, on such an occasion, her husband was certain to be involved.

Monsieur de l'Estorade, though no great orator, was influ-

ential in the Upper Chamber, and regarded as a man of great foresight and accurate judgment; and at every step he took as he moved round the rooms, he was stopped either by some political bigwig or by some magnate of finance, of diplomacy, or merely of the business world, and eagerly invited to give his opinion on the prospects of the opening session. To every question, the President of the Court of Exchequer answered at more or less length, and now and again he had the keen satisfaction of finding himself the centre of a group who anxiously took note of his views.

This success made him quite indifferent to his wife's agitated signals; and she, keeping her eye on his various evolutions, telegraphed to him whenever he came within her ken that she wished to end the sitting. The little heed he paid to her impatience was in itself a fact to be noted in the record of the usually clear and serene sky that bent over the couple. Ten years even after their marriage, Monsieur de l'Estorade, who had been accepted by his wife with anything rather than enthusiasm, would have been horrified at the idea of such obviously slack obedience; but three lustres had now elapsed since he had won the hand of the beautiful Renée de Maucombe; and though she had not yet lost any of her magnificent beauty, he, on the contrary, had grown a good deal older. The twenty years that lay between his age of fifty-two and hers of thirty-two was all the more marked now because, even at seven-and-thirty, when he had married and settled, his hair was already gray and his health wrecked. A malady of the liver from which he then suffered, after lying dormant for some years, had of late seemed to assume an active form; and while this morbid condition, a common one among statesmen and ambitious workers, produced a stronger taste in him for political interests, it no doubt made his mouth harder, so to speak, to the matrimonial bit.

It is, however, quite possible that the absurd fit of jealousy to which we once saw him yield was caused solely by the obscure disorder which had already tinged his worn face with the yellowish hue of pronounced liver-disease.

Monsieur de l'Estorade talked so long and so well, that at last the drawing-room was almost empty, and only a small circle was left of intimate friends, gathered round his wife and Madame de Rastignac. The Minister himself, as he returned from seeing off the last of his guests to whose importance such an attention was due, rescued Monsieur de l'Estorade from the clutches—as he thought somewhat perilous—of a Wurtemberg Baron, the mysterious agent of some Northern Power, who, helped by his Orders and his gibberish, had the knack of acquiring rather more information about any given matter than his interlocutor intended to give him.

Hooking his arm confidentially through that of the guileless Monsieur de l'Estorade, who was lending a gullible ear to the trans-Rhenish rhodomontade in which the wily Teuton carefully wrapped up the curiosity he dared not frankly avow:

"That man, you know, is a mere nobody," said Rastignac, as the foreigner made him a humbly obsequious bow.

"He does not talk badly," replied Monsieur de l'Estorade. "If it were not for his villainous accent——"

"That, on the contrary, is his strong point, as it is Nucingen's, my father-in-law. With their way of mutilating the French language, and always seeming to be in the clouds, these Germans have the cleverest way of worming out a secret——"

As they joined the group about Madame de Rastignac—

"Madame," said the Minister to the Countess, "I have brought you back your husband, having caught him red-handed in 'criminal conversation' with a man from the Zollverein who would probably not have released him this night."

"I was about to ask Madame de Rastignac if she could give me a bed, to set her free at any rate, for Monsieur de l'Estorade's interminable conversations have hindered me from leaving her at liberty."

Madame de Rastignac protested as to the pleasure it had been to enjoy Madame de l'Estorade's society as long as possible, only regretting the necessity for frequent interruptions to respond to the civilities of the extraordinary looking newly-

elected deputies who had come in an endless stream to make their bow to her.

"Oh, my dear!" cried Rastignac. "The session will open immediately; pray give yourself no scornful airs to the elect representatives of the nation!—Besides, you will get into Madame de l'Estorade's black books. One of our newly-made sovereigns is, I am told, high in her good graces."

"In mine?" said Madame de l'Estorade with a look of surprise, and she colored a little. Her complexion, still brilliantly clear, lent itself readily to this expression of emotion.

"To be sure! quite true," said Madame de Rastignac. "I had quite forgotten that artist who, on the last occasion of my seeing you at your own house, was cutting out such charming silhouettes for your children, in a corner. I must own that I was then far from supposing that he would become one of our masters."

"But even then he was talked of as a candidate," replied Madame de l'Estorade; "though, to be sure, it was not taken very seriously."

"Quite seriously by me," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, eager to add a stripe to his reputation as a prophet. "From the very first talk on political matters that I had with our candidate, I expressed my astonishment at his breadth of view—Monsieur de Ronquerolles is my witness."

"Certainly," said this gentleman, "he is no ordinary youth; still, I do not build much on his future career. He is a man of impulse, and, as Monsieur de Talleyrand well observed, the first impulse is always the best."

"Well, then, monsieur?" said Madame de l'Estorade innocently.

"Well, madame," replied Monsieur de Ronquerolles, who piqued himself on scepticism, "heroism is out of date; it is a desperately heavy and clumsy outfit, and sinks the wearer on every road."

"And yet I should have supposed that great qualities of heart and mind had something to do with the composition of a man of mark."

"Qualities of mind, yes—you are right there; but even so, on condition of their tendency in a certain direction. But qualities of heart—of what use, I ask you, can they be in a political career?—To hoist you on to stilts on which you walk far less firmly than on your feet, off which you tumble at the first push and break your neck."

"Whence we must conclude," said Madame de Rastignac, laughing, while her friend preserved a disdainful silence, "that the political world is peopled with good-for-nothings."

"That is very near the truth, madame; ask *Lazarille!*" And with this allusion to a pleasantry that is still famous on the stage, Monsieur de Ronquerolles laid his hand familiarly on the Minister's shoulder.

"In my opinion, my dear fellow, your generalizations are rather too particular," said Rastignac.

"Nay," said Monsieur de Ronquerolles, "come now; let us be serious.—To my knowledge, this Monsieur de Sallenauve—the name he has assumed, I believe, instead of Dorlange, which he himself said frankly enough was a name for the stage—has committed two very handsome deeds within a short time. In my presence, aiding and abetting, he was within an ace of being killed by the Duc de Rhétoré for a few unpleasant remarks made on one of his friends. Now he really need not have heard those remarks; and, having heard them, it was straining a point to consider that he had, I will not say a claim, but even a right to take up the quarrel."

"Ah!" said Madame de Rastignac, "it was he then who fought the duel with Monsieur de Rhétoré which was so much discussed?"

"Yes, madame, and I may add that he behaved at the meeting with splendid courage—and I know what I am talking about."

Before the other "handsome deed" could be brought into the discussion, at the risk of seeming rude by interrupting the course of the argument, Madame de l'Estorade rose and gave her husband an imperceptible nod to signify that she wished to leave.

Monsieur de l'Estorade took advantage of the slightness of the signal to ignore it, and remained immovable. Monsieur de Ronquerolles went on:

"His other achievement was to fling himself under the feet of some runaway horses and snatch Madame de l'Estorade's little daughter from certain death."

Everybody looked at Madame de l'Estorade, who this time blushed crimson; but at the same instant she found words, feeling that by some means she must keep her countenance, and she said with some spirit:

"It would seem, monsieur, that you wish to convey that Monsieur de Sallenauve was a great fool for his pains, since he risked his life, and would thus have cut short all his chances in the future. I may tell you, however, that there is one woman whom you would hardly persuade to share that opinion—and that is my child's mother."

As she spoke, Madame de l'Estorade was almost in tears. She warmly shook hands with Madame de Rastignac, and so emphatically made a move, that this time she got her fixture of a husband under way.

Madame de Rastignac, as she went with her friend to the drawing-room door, spoke in an undertone:

"I really thank you," said she, "for having boldly held your own against that cynic. Monsieur de Rastignac has some unpleasant allies left from his bachelor days."

As she returned to her seat, Monsieur de Ronquerolles was speaking:

"Aha," said he, "these life-preservers!—Poor l'Estorade is, in fact, as yellow as a lemon!"

"Indeed, monsieur, you are atrocious!" said Madame de Rastignac indignantly. "A woman whom calumny has never dared to blight, who lives solely for her husband and children, and who has tears in her eyes at the mere remote recollection of the danger that theatened one of them!"

"Bless me, madame," said Monsieur de Ronquerolles, heedless of this little lecture, "I can only tell you that your Newfoundland dog is a dangerous and unwholesome breed.—After

all, if Madame de l'Estorade should think herself too seriously compromised, she has always this to fall back on—she can get him to marry the girl he saved."

Monsieur de Ronquerolles had no sooner spoken than he was conscious of the hideous blunder he had made by uttering such a speech in Augusta de Nucingen's drawing-room. It was his turn to redden—though he had lost the habit of it, and deep silence, which seemed to enfold him, put the crowning touch to his embarrassment.

"That clock is surely slow," said Rastignac, to make some sound of whatever words, and also to put an end to a sitting at which speech was so luckless.

"It is indeed," said Monsieur de Ronquerolles, after looking at his watch. "Just on a quarter-past twelve"—the hour was half-past eleven.

He bowed formally to the mistress of the house, and went, as did the rest of the company.

"You saw how distressed he was," said Rastignac to his wife, as soon as they were alone. "He was a thousand miles away from any malicious intent."

"No matter; as I was saying just now to Madame de l'Estorade, your bachelor life has left you heir to some odious acquaintances."

"But, my dear child, the King is civil every day to people he would be only too glad to lock up in the Bastille, if there still were a Bastille, and if the Charter would allow it."

Madame de Rastignac made no reply; she went up to her room without saying good-night.

Not long after, the Minister tapped at a side door of the room, and finding it locked:

"Augusta," said he, in the voice which the most ordinary *bourgeois* of the Rue Saint-Denis would have adopted under similar circumstances.

The only answer he heard was a bolt shot inside.

"There are some things in the past," said he to himself, with much annoyance, "that are quite unlike that door—they always stand wide open on the present."

"Augusta," he began again, "I wanted to ask you at what hour I might find Madame de l'Estorade at home. I mean to call on her to-morrow after what has happened——"

"At four o'clock," the lady called back, "when she comes in from the Tuileries, where she always walks with the children."

One of the questions which had been most frequently mooted in the world of fashion since Madame de Rastignac's marriage was this—"Does Augusta love her husband?"

Doubt was allowable; Mademoiselle de Nucingen's marriage had been the ill-favored and not very moral result of an intimacy such as is apt to react on the daughter's life when it has lasted in the mother's till the course of years and long staleness have brought it to a state of atrophy and paralysis. In such unions, where love is to be transferred to the next generation, the husband is usually more than willing, for he is released from joys that have turned rancid, and avails himself of a bargain like that offered by the magician in the *Arabian Nights* to exchange old lamps for new. But the wife is in the precisely opposite predicament; between her and her husband there stands an ever-present memory—which may come to life again. Even apart from the dominion of the senses, she must be conscious of an older power antagonistic to her newer influence; must she not almost always be a victim, and can she be supposed to feel impassioned devotion to the maternal leavings?—Rastignac had stood waiting outside the door for about as long as it has taken to give this brief analysis of a not uncommon conjugal situation.

"Well, good-night, Augusta," said he, preparing to depart.

As he piteously took his leave, the door was suddenly opened, and his wife, throwing herself into his arms, laid her head on his shoulder, sobbing.

The question was answered: Madame de Rastignac loved her husband.—And yet the distant murmuring of a nice little hell might be heard under the flowers of this paradise.

Rastignac was less punctual than usual next morning; and

by the time he went into his private office, the ante-room beyond was already occupied by seven applicants armed with letters of introduction, besides two peers and seven members of the Lower Chamber.

A bell rang sharply, and the usher, with such agitation as proved contagious among the visitors, hurried into the Minister's room. A moment later he reappeared with the stereotyped apology:

"The Minister is called to attend a Council. He will, however, have the honor of receiving the members of the Upper and Lower Chambers. The rest of the gentlemen are requested to call again."

"But when—again?" asked one of the postponed victims. "This is the third time I have called within three days, and all for nothing."

The usher shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say, "That is no fault of mine; I only obey orders." However, hearing some murmurs as to the privilege accorded to the Honorable Members:

"Those gentlemen," said he, with some pomposity, "come to discuss matters of public interest."

The visitors having been paid in this false coin, the bell rang again, and the usher put on his most affable smile.

By some obscure natural affinity the happier portion of this little crowd had gravitated into one corner. Though they had never met before, since most of them were the offspring of the latest national travail, they had somehow recognized each other by a *representative* manner, very difficult to define, but quite unmistakable. It was to this upper side of the sieve, so to speak, that the man directed his insinuating glance; not daring to decide among so many great men, he mutely suggested:

"Whom shall I have the honor of announcing first?"

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Franchessini, "I believe I have seen you all come in?"

And he went towards the door which the usher threw open, announcing in a loud, distinct voice:

"Monsieur le Colonel Franchessini."

"Ah, a good beginning this morning!" said the Minister, going forward a few steps and holding out his hand. "What do you want of me, my dear fellow? A railway, a canal, a suspension bridge——?"

"I have come, my dear friend, to trouble you about a little private affair—a matter that concerns both you and me?"

"That is not the happiest way of urging the question, for I must tell you plainly I hold no good recommendation to myself."

"You have had a visitor lately?" said the Colonel, proceeding to the point.

"A visitor? Dozens. I always have."

"Yes. But on the evening of Sunday the 12th—the day of the riot?"

"Ah! now I know what you mean.—But the man is going mad."

"Do you think so?" said the Colonel dubiously.

"Well, what am I to think of a sort of visionary who makes his way in here under favor of the relaxed vigilance which in a Ministerial residence always follows on musket-firing in the streets; who proceeds to tell me that the Government is undermined by the Republican party, at the very moment when the Staff-officers of the National Guard assure me that we have not had even a skirmish, and who finally suggests that he is himself the only man who can insure the future safety of the dynasty?"

"So that you did not welcome him very cordially?"

"So that I soon showed him out, and rather peremptorily, in spite of his persistency. At any time, and under any circumstances, he is a visitor I could never find agreeable; but when, on my pointing out to him that he holds a post for which he is admirably fitted, and which he fills with the greatest skill, so that it must be the utmost limit of his ambition, the maniac replies that unless his services are accepted France is on the brink of a precipice, you may suppose I had but one thing to say—namely, that we hope to save it without his help."

"Well, it is done!" said the Colonel. "But now, if you will allow me to explain matters——"

The Minister, sitting at his table with his back to the fire, leaned round to look at the clock.

"Look here, my dear fellow," said he, after seeing what the time was, "I have a suspicion that you will not be brief, and there is a hungry pack waiting outside that door; even if I could give you time, I could not listen properly. Be so kind as to go for an airing till noon, and come back to breakfast. I will introduce you to Madame de Rastignac, whom you do not know, I believe, and when we rise from table we will take a turn in the garden; there I shall be wholly at your service, and can give you all the time you need."

"That will suit me perfectly," said the Colonel, leaving. As he crossed the waiting-room:

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "I have not kept you long, have I?"

He shook hands with one and another, and went away.

Three hours later, when the Colonel appeared in Madame de Rastignac's drawing-room—where he was introduced to her—he found there Nucingen, the Minister's father-in-law, who came almost every day to breakfast there on his way to the Bourse; Émile Blondet, of the *Débats;* Messrs. Moreau (de l'Oise), Dionis, and Camusot, three fiercely Conservative members; and two of the newly elect, whose names it is not certain that Rastignac himself knew. Franchessini also recognized Martial de la Roche-Hugon, the Minister's brother-in-law; the inevitable des Lupeaulx, a Peer of France; and a third figure, who talked for a long time with Rastignac in a window recess. He, Émile Blondet explained in reply to the Colonel's inquiries, was a former functionary of the secret police, who still carried on his profession as an amateur, making the round of all the Government offices every morning, under every Ministry, with as much zeal and punctuality as if it still were his duty.

In consequence of the somewhat keen remarks that had passed between the Colonel and Maxime de Trailles as to the

frame of mind in which Madame de Rastignac might find herself when marriage should have palled a little, he was bound to give some attention to the last and fourteenth person, a fresh-colored, rosy youth who was, he heard, the Minister's private secretary. It is well known that private secretaries, when they are caught young, if they are but zealous and guileless, have to some extent taken the place of the aides-de-camp of the past. However, as soon as he heard Madame de Rastignac address this young official with the familiar *tu,* asking him after his mother Madame de Restaud, he troubled himself no further. This was merely a little cousin, not a dangerous rival, whatever the playwrights may say, when a young wife has a due sense of her dignity. Monsieur de Rastignac had taken as his private secretary Félix Restaud, second son of his mother-in-law Madame de Nucingen's sister. Ernest, the elder, was pledged to the Legitimist party as having married Camille, daughter of the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, who must not be confounded with the Duchess of the same name.

Madame de Rastignac, seen close, was fair but not lymphatic. She was strikingly like her mother, but with the shade of greater elegance, which in parvenu families grows from generation to generation as they get further from the source. The last drop of the original Goriot seemed to have evaporated in this lovely young woman, who was especially distinguished by the fine hands and feet, which show breeding, and of which the absence in Madame de Nucingen, in spite of her beauty, had always stamped her so distressingly as the vermicelli-maker's daughter.

The Colonel, as a man who might subsequently have ideas of his own, showed repressed eagerness in his attentions to Madame de Rastignac, with the gallantry, now rather out of date, which seems addressed to Woman rather than to the individual woman; idle men alone, especially if they have been soldiers, seem to preserve a reflection of this tradition. The Colonel, whose successes in the boudoir had been many, knew that this distant method of preparing the approaches

is a very effective strategy in besieging a place. An air of adoration and worship, though so much out of fashion, never displeases a woman; and, with the exception of a few who are Voltairean sceptics as to love, regarding it as mere good-fellowship, and laughing at the respectful feeling of a man who hesitates to approach them with a cigar between his teeth, so to speak, most women are grateful to an adorer, particularly if he is not a Celadon, when he treats them with pious reverence and rather like sacred relics.

The Colonel, as he meant to be asked to the house again, took care to speak of his wife. "She lived," he said, "very much in the old English way, in her own home; but he would be happy to drag her out of her habitual retirement to introduce her to a lady of such distinguished merit as Madame de Rastignac, if indeed she would allow him to bring her. In spite of a wide difference in age between his wife and his friend the Minister's, they would find, he thought, one happy point of contact in a similar zeal for good works."

In fact, Franchessini had hardly entered the room when he found himself obliged to take from Madame de Rastignac a ticket for a ball of which she was a lady patroness, to be got up for the benefit of the victims of the recent earthquake in Martinique.

It was the fashion *then* among women to display in such acts of charity an audacity beyond all bounds; now, as it happened, Madame Franchessini was an Irishwoman of great piety, who spent in good works most of her spare time after superintending the management of her house, and a large part of the sums she reserved for her own use apart from her husband's. So the offer of an intimacy with a woman who would be so ready to give her money and her exertions when needed for a *crèche,* or infant schools, or children orphaned by the cholera, was a really skilful stroke of diplomacy; and it shows that the sportsman in the Colonel had not altogether killed the faculty of foresight.

Breakfast over, the guests left or withdrew to the drawing-room; and Franchessini, who had sat at Madame de Rastignac's right hand, continued his conversation with her.

While he, like Hercules at the feet of Omphale, devoted his anxious attention to the worsted work—for the benefit of the poor—which the Countess held in her pretty fingers, the Minister, in obedience to the proverb, "Give every dog his day," had taken Émile Blondet's arm—Blondet of the *Débats*—and made a couple of rounds of the grass plot that lay outside the glass doors of the drawing-room. As he parted from him he gave him this final hint:

"You understand? We do not want to drive a bargain; however, the majority is ours."

"Now for you and me, my friend!" said he to the Colonel, and they went into the garden.

"I, less fortunate than you," said Franchessini, taking up his story at the point where it had been interrupted a few hours previously, "have kept up communications with the man we spoke of—not constant, indeed; but a sort of evil concatenation of contact. To avoid ever having him in my house, we agreed that whenever he wanted to speak to me he should write to me without any signature and tell me where to meet him. In the almost impossible event of my wishing to see him, I was to send a playing card figure cut out to his den in the Rue Sainte-Anne, and he would notify the spot where we might meet undisturbed. He may be trusted for a clever choice of a suitable place; no man knows his Paris better, or the ways of moving about *underground*."

"High political qualifications!" said Rastignac sarcastically.

"I tell you the whole truth, you see," replied the Colonel, "to prove to you that, in my opinion, this is a man to be treated with respect; and, at the same time, that you may not suppose that I am showing you a mere phantasmagoria with a view to persuading you into doing a thing quite contrary to your first intentions."

"Pray go on," said Rastignac, pausing to gather a full-blown China rose—by way, perhaps, of showing his perfect openness of mind.

"On the evening of the very day when you had given him

so rough a reception, and my election was already known by telegraph and announced in an evening paper, I received a note from him, a thing that had not happened for the last eighteen months—very short and concise:—'To-morrow morning, six o'clock—Redoute de Clignancourt.' "

"Like a challenge," observed Rastignac.

"A reminder of one, certainly; for, as you may remember, it was at Montmartre that, in that unfortunate duel—with my own hands—about 1820—poor young Taillefer!—Sometimes, at dusk, I think of that luckless fellow, though the wound, as you know, was honestly given——"

"Ay, one of those ugly stories," said Rastignac, "which save us from regretting our young days when such things were done."

"The man whom you call a visionary," Franchessini went on, "was, when I joined him, sitting on a knoll, his head between his hands. When he heard me, and as I went close to him, he rose in a state of high excitement, took me by the hand, led me to the spot—very little altered—where the duel took place, and in the strident voice you know so well: 'What did you do here, nearly five-and-twenty years ago?' said he.—'A thing,' said I, 'of which, on my honor, I repent.'—'And I too.—And for whom?' As I made no reply, he went on: 'For a man whose fortune I wanted to make. You killed the brother to please me, that the sister might be a rich heiress for him to marry——' "

"But it was all done without my knowledge," Rastignac hastily put in; "and I did everything in my power to prevent it."

"So I told him," said the Colonel, "and he paid no heed to the remark, but only grew more frantic, exclaiming: 'Well, and when I go to that man's house, not to ask him a favor, but to offer him my services, he shows me the door! And does he think I am going to overlook it?' "

"He is remarkably touchy," said Rastignac quietly. "I did not show him the door. I only rather roughly cut short his boasting and exaggeration."

"He then went on," said the Colonel, "to relate his interview with you the previous evening; the proposal he had made to give up his place in the criminal police in favor of a post as superintendent—far more needed, in his opinion—of political malefactors. 'I am sick,' said he, 'of liming twigs to catch thieves, such an idiotic kind of game-bird that all their tricks are stale to me. And, then, what interest can I find in nabbing men who would steal a silver mug or a few banknotes, when there are others only waiting for a chance to grab at the crown?' "

"Very true," said Rastignac, with a smile, "if it were not for the National Guard, and the army, and the two Chambers, and the King who can ride."

"He added," said Franchessini, "that he was not appreciated, and, with a reminiscence of the lingo of the past, that he was fagged out over mere child's play; that he had in him very powerful qualities adapted to shine in a higher sphere; that he had trained a man to take his place; that I must positively see and talk to you; and that now I was a member, I had a right to speak and impress on you the possible results of a refusal."

"My dear fellow," said Rastignac decisively, "I can but say, as I did at the beginning of our conversation, the man is a lunatic, and I have never been afraid of a madman, whether a cheerful or furious one."

"I do not deny that I myself saw great difficulties in the way of satisfying his demand. However, I tried to soothe him by promising to see you, pointing out to him that nothing could be done in a hurry; and in point of fact, but for an accessory circumstance, I should probably not have mentioned the matter for some long time to come."

"And that circumstance——?" asked the Minister.

"Yesterday morning," replied the Colonel, "I had a visit from Maxime, who had just returned from Arcis-sur-Aube——"

"I know," said Rastignac. "He mentioned the matter to me—an idea devoid of common-sense. Either the man on

whom he wants to set your bloodhound is good for something —or he is not. If he is not, it is perfectly useless to employ a dangerous and suspected instrument to destroy the thing that does not exist. If, on the other hand, we have to do with a good man in the right place, he has, on the platform of the Chamber, and in the newspapers, every means, not only of parrying such blows as we may be able to strike with muffled swords, but of turning them against ourselves.—Take it as a general rule, in a country like ours, crazy for publicity, wherever the hand of the police is seen, even if it were to unveil the basest turpitude, you may be sure that there will be an outcry against the Government. Opinion in such a case behaves like the man to whom some one sang an air by Mozart to prove how great a composer he was. The hearer, conquered by the evidence, said at last to the singer, 'Well, Mozart may be a great musician, but you, my good friend, may congratulate yourself on having a great cold!'"

"Indeed, there is much truth in your remark," said Franchessini. "Still, the man Maxime wants to unmask can only be of respectable mediocrity; and without being able to *lunge* with such force as you suppose, he may nevertheless tease you a good deal. The most dangerous adversaries are not all giants of formidable eloquence."

"I expect to ascertain the true worth of your new colleague ere long from a quarter where I may count on better information than Monsieur de Trailles can command. On this occasion he has let himself in, and is trying to make up for lack of skill by vehemence. As to your incubus—whom I should not, in any case, employ to carry out Maxime's dream —as he seems not altogether useless, at least from the point of view of your connection with him, just to give him an answer I should say——"

"Well, what?" said Franchessini, with increased attention.

"I should tell him that, quite apart from his criminal experience, which, as soon as he heads the political ranks, might expose him to serious outrages that would recoil on us, there are in his past life some very ugly records——"

"But records only," replied Franchessini. "For you understand that when he ventured into your presence it was, so to speak, in a new skin."

"I know all," said Rastignac. "You do not suppose that he is the only police spy in Paris.—After his visit I made inquiries, and I heard that since 1830, when he was placed at the head of his department, he had lived a middle-class life of the strictest respectability; the only fault I have to find with it is that it is too perfect a disguise."

"Nevertheless——" said the Colonel.

"He is rich," Rastignac went on; "his salary is twelve thousand francs a year from the Government; with three hundred thousand he inherited from Lucien de Rubempré, and the profits from a patent-leather factory which he has near Gentilly, and which is paying very well. His aunt Jacqueline Collin, who keeps house with him, still dabbles in certain dirty jobs, from which, of course, she derives large profits; and I have strong reason to believe that they have both gambled successfully on the Bourse. The deuce is in it, my dear fellow, if, under such circumstances, a man cannot whitewash himself and turn over a new leaf. In the age in which we live, luxury is a power; it does not, indeed, secure consideration and respect, but it presents their counterfeit, which comes to much the same thing. Just set some great financiers or statesmen I could name in a garret, or going about on foot—why, the street boys would run after them and hoot them like drunkards or carnival guys!—And your man, who, to escape tramping the mud, wanted to perch his life on a pedestal, could find no better plan than to get himself suddenly transferred to the furthest social pole from his own. Every evening now, in a café close to the Préfecture, at the foot of the Pont Saint-Michel, he sits down sociably to his game of dominoes; and on Sundays he goes with a party of retired tradesmen to spend the day in philosophical retirement in a shanty he has bought not far from the woods of Romainville in the Prés Saint-Gervais; there he tries to grow blue dahlias, and was talking last year of crowning a rose-queen!

"Now all this, my dear Colonel, is too bucolic to lead up to the superintendence of the political police. Let him bestir himself a little—this old *Germeuil,* fling a little money about, give some dinners!—Why, the executioner could get men to dine with him if he wished it."

"I quite agree with you," said Franchessini. "I think that he keeps himself too much curled up for fear of attracting notice."

"Tell him, on the contrary, to uncurl; and, since he wants to have a finger in public business, he should find some creditable opportunity for being talked about. Does he fancy that, hide in what corner he will, the press will not know where to find him? Let him do as the niggers do; they do not try to wash themselves white, but they have a passion for bright colors, and dress in scarlet coats covered with gold braid.—I know what I should do in his place: to appear thoroughly cleaned, I should take up with some actress, some one very notorious, conspicuous, before the public. I do not say that I would ruin myself, but I would seem to ruin myself for her, with all the airs of one of those frenzied passions for which the public is always indulgent, if not sympathetic. I should display all my luxury on this idol's account; people would come, not to my house, but to hers. Then, thanks to my mistress, I should be endured at my own table, and by degrees I should make a connection. All the leading men in our sphere of life gather round a famous actress as inevitably as moths round a candle; the men who can make or unmake, or —which is the crowning feat of art—can remake a reputation. Politicians, men on 'Change, journalists, artists, men of letters, I would harness them all to drag me out of the mud, while feeding them well, and showing myself ever ready with my sympathy, and yet more with my money, to help them in a hundred little ways.

"All this, my dear fellow, will not, of course, make him a Saint Vincent de Paul—though he too had been on the galleys—but it would get him classed among the third or fourth rate notabilities—a man possible to deal with. The

road thus laid, Monsieur de Saint-Estève might prove 'negotiable'; and if he then came to me, and I were still in power, I might be able to listen to him."

"There is certainly something to be said for this plan," replied Franchessini. But in his own mind he reflected that his friend the Minister had made great strides since the days of the Pension Vauquer, and that he and Vautrin—as Saint-Estève was then called—had exchanged parts.

"But at any rate," added Rastignac, going up the steps to return to the drawing-room, "make him clearly understand that he misinterpreted my way of receiving him. That evening I was naturally absorbed in anxious reflections."

"Be quite easy," said Franchessini, "I will talk to him in the right way; for, as I must repeat, he is not a man to drive to extremities; there have been incidents in our past which cannot be wiped out."

And as the Minister made no reply, it was sufficiently obvious that he appreciated the observation at its true value.

"You will be here for the King's speech, I hope," said Rastignac to the Colonel; "we want a little enthusiasm."

Franchessini, before leaving, asked Madame de Rastignac to name a day when he might have the honor of bringing his wife to call.

"Any day," replied Augusta, "but more especially any Friday."

At the hour when Rastignac, by his wife's instructions, thought himself sure to find Madame de l'Estorade, he did not fail to call. Like all who had been present at the little scene to which Monsieur de Ronquerolles' remarks had given rise, the Minister had been struck by the Countess' agitation; and without concerning himself to gauge the nature or depth of her feelings towards the man who had saved her child, he was convinced that she was at least greatly interested by him.

The unexpected feat of winning his election attracted the attention of the Government to Sallenauve, all the more be-

cause at first his nomination had hardly been taken seriously. It was known, too, that at the preliminary meeting on the eve of the election he had shown himself a clever man. He might easily become a fairly resonant voice, speaking for a dangerous and restless party, represented in the Chamber by an almost imperceptible minority. His fortune, whatever its origin, would enable him to dispense with Ministerial favors, and all the information obtainable represented him as a man not easily turned from the path he had chosen, and characterized by a certain gravity of demeanor and purpose. On the other hand, the obscurity that hung over his history might at any moment serve to extinguish him.

Rastignac, while affecting to discard with vehemence the idea of an attack from that side, in his own mind did not altogether renounce the possibility of using means which he foresaw would be difficult to handle; he would fall back on them only if it were obviously necessary. In this state of things Madame de l'Estorade might be useful in two ways: through her it seemed easy to arrange an *accidental* meeting with the new deputy, so as to study him at ease and ascertain whether there were any single point at which he might prove accessible to terms. And since this, it would seem, was improbable, it would at any rate be easy, by confiding to Madame de l'Estorade in a friendly but official way the underhand plotting that was going on against Sallenauve, to warn him to be cautious, and consequently less aggressive.

And all this would follow naturally from the step the Minister was now taking. By seeming to call on purpose to apologize for Monsieur de Ronquerolles' mode of speech, he would allude in the most natural manner possible to the man who had been the occasion and the object of it; and the conversation once started on these lines, he must be clumsy indeed if he could not achieve one or the other, or possibly both, of the results he aimed at.

Monsieur de Rastignac's plan of action was, however, destined to be modified. The servant, who happened to be speaking to the gate keeper, had just informed the visitor that

Madame de l'Estorade was not at home, when Monsieur de l'Estorade came in on foot, and seeing the Minister's carriage, rushed forward. However well a man may stand with the world, it always seems a pity to dismiss a visitor of such importance; and the accountant-general was not the man to resign himself to such a misfortune without a struggle.

"But my wife will soon be in," he insisted as he saw his house threatened with the loss of such a piece of good fortune. "She is gone to Ville-d'Avray with her daughter, and Monsieur and Madame Octave de Camps. Monsieur Marie-Gaston, a great friend of ours—the charming poet, you know, who married Louise de Chaulieu—has a house there, where his wife died. He has never till now set foot in it since that misfortune. These ladies were so charitable as to accompany him, so as to break the shock of his return; and a little out of curiosity too, for the villa is said to be one of the most perfect retreats ever imagined."

"But in that case Madame de l'Estorade's visit may last till late," said Rastignac. "It was to her, and not to you, my dear Count, that I came to offer my apologies for the little scene last evening, which seemed to annoy her a good deal.—Will you kindly express to her from me——"

"I will stake my head on it, my dear sir, that by the time you turn the street corner, my wife will be here; she is absolutely punctual in everything she does, and to me it is simply miraculous that she should be even a few minutes late."

Seeing him so bent on detaining him, Rastignac feared to be disobliging, and made up his mind to be dragged out of his carriage, and await the Countess' return in her drawing-room; for, often enough, for less than this a faithful voter has been lost.

"So Madame Octave de Camps is in Paris?" said he, for the sake of saying something.

"Yes, she made her appearance unexpectedly without letting my wife know, though they are in constant correspondence. Her husband has, I think, some request to make to you. You have not seen him?"

"No; but I think I remember seeing his card."

"It is some mining business he is projecting; and as I have your ear, allow me to tell you something about it."

"Mercy!" thought Rastignac, "I am very kind, I am sure, to have come here merely to stand a fire of recommendations, point-blank."

So, cutting short the explanation l'Estorade had already begun, and seeing no reason why he should not quite unceremoniously ask the husband one of the things which he had proposed to ask the wife:

"Excuse my interrupting you," said he, "we will return to the subject; but at this moment I am in some uneasiness."

"How is that?"

"Your friend Sallenauve's election has made a devil of a rumpus. The King was speaking of him to me this morning, and he was not particularly delighted when I communicated to him the opinion you expressed only last evening as to our new adversary."

"Bless me! But, as you know, the tribune is a rock on which many a ready-made reputation is wrecked. And I am sorry too that you should have spoken of Sallenauve to the King as a friend of ours. It is not I who direct the elections. You should appeal to the Minister of the Interior. I can only say that I tried fifty ways to hinder the tiresome man from standing."

"But you must see that the King can owe you no grudge because you happen to know a candidate so absolutely undreamed of——"

"No. But last evening in your own drawing-room you remarked to my wife that she seemed greatly interested in him. I could not contradict before others, because it is monstrous to deny knowledge of a man to whom we lie under so serious an obligation. But, in fact, my wife especially has felt that obligation a burden since the day when he went off to stand for election. Though she never troubles her head about politics, she prefers the society of those who swim in our own waters, and she probably foresees that an intimacy with a

man whose daily business it is to attack our side may be difficult and very moderately pleasant. She even said to me the other day that he was an acquaintance to be quietly dropped——"

"Not, I hope," interrupted Rastignac, "before you have done me the service I came to ask."

"At your service, my dear Minister, whatever it may be."

"To plunge in head foremost, then: before seeing this man in the Chamber I want to take his measure, and for that purpose I want to meet him. To invite him to dine with us would be useless; under the eye of his party he would not dare to accept, even if he wished it. Besides, he would be on his guard, and I should not see him as he is. But if we came across each other by chance, I should find him, as it were, in undress, and could feel my way to discover if he has a weak spot."

"If I asked him to meet you at dinner here, there would be the same difficulty.—Supposing I were to find out some evening that he intended to call, and sent you word in the course of the day?"

"We should be too small a party," said Rastignac, "and then a separate conversation between two is hard to manage; the meeting is so intimate that any *tête-à-tête* betrays the aggravating circumstance of premeditated arrangement——"

"Stay!" cried Monsieur de l'Estorade, "I have a bright idea——"

"If the idea is really bright," thought the Minister, "I shall have gained by not finding the lady in, for she certainly would not have been so anxious to carry out my wishes."

"One day soon," l'Estorade went on, "we are giving a little party, a children's dance. It is a treat my wife, tired of refusing, has promised our little girl, in fact as a festival to celebrate our joy at still having her with us. The Preserver, as you perceive, is an integral and indispensable item, and I think I may promise you noise enough to enable you to take your man aside without any difficulty, while at a party of that kind premeditation can hardly be suspected."

"The idea is certainly a good one—probability alone is wanting."

"Probability?"

"Certainly. You forgot that I have been married scarcely a year, and that I have no contingent to account for my presence that evening among your party."

"That is true. I had not thought of that."

"But let me consider," said the Minister. "Among your guests will there be the little Roche-Hugons?"

"No doubt; the children of a man I should esteem most highly even if he had not the honor of so near a relationship to you."

"Well, then, all is plain sailing. My wife will come with her sister-in-law, Madame de la Roche-Hugon, to see her nieces dancing—nothing is more complimentary on such occasions than to drop in without the formality of an invitation; and I, without saying anything to my wife, am gallant enough to come to take her home."

"Admirable!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "and we by this little drama gain the delightful reality of your presence here!"

"You are too kind," said Rastignac, shaking hands cordially. "But I believe it will be well to say nothing to Madame de l'Estorade. Our puritan, if he got wind of the plan, is the man to stay away. It will be better that I should pounce on him unexpectedly like a tiger on its prey."

"Quite so.—A surprise for everybody!"

"Then I am off," said Rastignac, "for fear I should drop a word to Madame de l'Estorade. I shall be able to amuse the King to-morrow by telling him of our little plot and the education of children to be political go-betweens."

"Well, well," said Monsieur de l'Estorade philosophically, "is not this the whole history of life: great effects from small causes?"

Rastignac had only just left when Madame de l'Estorade, her daughter Naïs, and her friends Monsieur and Madame Octave de Camps came into the drawing-room where the con-

spiracy had been laid against the new member's independence —a plot here recorded at some length as a specimen of the thousand-and-one trivialities to which a constitutional minister not unfrequently has to attend.

"And do you not smell the smell of a Minister here?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade.

"Not such a very delicious scent, I am sure," replied Monsieur de Camps, who, as a Legitimist, belonged to the Opposition.

"That is a matter of taste," said the Peer.—"My dear," he went on, addressing his wife, "you have come so late that you have missed a distinguished visitor."

"Who is that?" the Countess asked indifferently.

"The Minister of Public Works, who came to offer you an apology. He had noted with regret the unpleasant impression made upon you by the theories put forward by that wretched Ronquerolles."

"That is disturbing himself for a very small matter," replied Madame de l'Estorade, who was far from sharing her husband's excitement.

"At any rate," replied he, "it was very polite of him to have noticed the matter."

Madame de l'Estorade, without seeming to care much, asked what had passed in the course of the visit.

"We discussed indifferent subjects," said Monsieur de l'Estorade craftily. "However, I took the opportunity of getting a word in on the subject of Monsieur de Camps' business."

"Much obliged," said Octave, with a bow. "If only you could have persuaded the gentleman to grant me a sight of his private secretary, who is as invisible as himself, between them they might arrange to give me an interview."

"You must not be annoyed with him," said Monsieur de l'Estorade. "Though his office is not strictly political, Rastignac has, of course, been much taken up with election matters. Now that he is freer, we will, if you like, call on him together one morning."

"I hesitate to trouble you about a matter that ought to go smoothly of itself; I am not asking a favor. I never will ask one of this Government; but since Monsieur de Rastignac is the dragon in charge of the metallic treasures of the soil, I am bound to go through the regular channel and apply to him."

"We can settle all that, and I have started the thing in the right direction," replied Monsieur de l'Estorade.

Then, to change the conversation, he said to Madame de Camps:

"Well, and the chalet, is it really such a marvel?"

"Oh," said Madame Octave, "it is a fascinating place; you can have no idea of such elegant perfection and such ideal comfort."

"And Marie-Gaston?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade, much as Orgon asks, "And Tartuffe?"—but with far less anxious curiosity.

"He was—I will not say quite calm," replied Madame de l'Estorade, "but certainly quite master of himself. His behavior was all the more satisfactory because the day began with a serious disappointment."

"What happened?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade.

"Monsieur de Sallenauve could not come with him," cried Naïs, making it her business to reply.

She was one of those children brought up in a hot-house who intervene rather oftener than they ought in matters that are discussed in their presence.

"Naïs," said her mother, "go and ask Mary to put your hair up."

The child perfectly understood that she was sent away to her English nurse for having spoken out of season, and she went off with a little pout.

"This morning," said Madame de l'Estorade, as soon as Naïs had closed the door, "Monsieur Marie-Gaston and Monsieur de Sallenauve were to have set out together for Ville-d'Avray, to receive us there, as had been arranged; last evening they had a visit from the organist who was so active in

promoting Monsieur de Sallenauve's election—he came to hear the Italian housekeeper sing and decide as to whether she were fit to appear in public."

"To be sure!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade. "Now we have ceased to make statues, we must quarter her somewhere!"

"As you say," answered his wife, rather tartly. "Monsieur de Sallenauve, to silence slander, was anxious to enable her to follow out her own idea of going on the stage; but he wished first to have the opinion of a judge who is said to be remarkably competent. The two gentlemen went with the organist to Saint-Sulpice, where the handsome Italian sings every evening in the services for the month of Mary. After hearing her: 'That contralto has at least sixty thousand francs in her throat!' the organist remarked."

"Just the income I derive from my forges!" remarked Octave de Camps.

"On returning home," Madame de l'Estorade went on, "Monsieur de Sallenauve told his housekeeper of the opinion pronounced on her performance, and with the utmost circumspection he insinuated that she must now soon be thinking of making her living, as she always intended. 'Yes, I think the time is come,' said Signora Luigia. Then she closed the conversation, saying, 'We will speak of it again.'—This morning at breakfast they were much surprised at having seen nothing of the Signora, who was habitually an early riser. Fancying she must be ill, Monsieur de Sallenauve sent a woman who comes to do the coarser cleaning to knock at her door. No answer. More and more anxious, the two gentlemen went themselves to find out what was happening.

"After knocking and calling in vain, they determined to turn the key and go in. In the room—nobody; but instead, a letter addressed to Monsieur de Sallenauve. In this letter the Italian said that, knowing herself to be in his way, she was retiring to the house of a woman she knew, and thanked him for all his kindness to her."

"The bird had felt its wings!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade. "It had flown away."

"That was not Monsieur de Sallenauve's idea," said the Countess. "He does not for an instant suspect her of an impulse of ingratitude.—Before explaining to the meeting of voters the relation in which they stood, Monsieur de Sallenauve, having ascertained that he would be questioned about it, had with great delicacy written to ask her whether this public avowal would not be too painful to her. She replied that she left it entirely to him. At the same time, he noticed on his return that she was out of spirits, and treated him with more than usual formality; whence he now concludes that, fancying herself a burden to him, in one of those fits of folly and temper of which she is peculiarly capable, she has thought it incumbent on her to leave his house without allowing him in any way to concern himself with providing for her in the future."

"Well, well," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "luck go with her!—A good riddance."

"Neither Monsieur de Sallenauve nor Monsieur Marie-Gaston takes such a stoical view of the matter. Knowing the woman's determined and headstrong nature, they fear lest she should have laid violent hands on her life—an idea which her previous history justifies. Or else they fear that she has been ill advised. The under-servant I mentioned had observed that while the gentlemen were in the country, Signora Luigia two or three times had a mysterious visitor in the person of a middle-aged lady, handsomely dressed, who came in a carriage, but whose appearance was singular, and who made a great show of secrecy about their interviews."

"Some charitable visitor," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "since the runaway is one of the very devout."

"At any rate, that must be ascertained; and it was to discover what has become of the luckless creature that Monsieur de Sallenauve, by Monsieur Marie-Gaston's earnest desire, spent the day in the search instead of accompanying him to Ville-d'Avray.

"I adhere to my opinion," replied Monsieur de l'Estorade.

"And in spite of immaculate virtue on both sides, I maintain that he has been caught by her."

"At any rate," remarked Madame de l'Estorade, emphasizing the word, "it does not seem that she *has been caught*."

"I do not agree with you," said Madame de Camps. "Flying from a person is often a proof of very true love."

Madame de l'Estorade looked at her friend with some vexation, and a faint color flushed her cheeks. But this no one noticed, the servant having thrown the double doors open and announced that dinner was served.

After dinner, they proposed to go to the play; it is one of the amusements that Parisians most miss in the country; and Monsieur Octave de Camps, whose odious ironworks, as Madame de l'Estorade called them, had made him a sort of "Wild Man of the Woods," had come to town eager for this diversion, for which his wife, a serious and stay-at-home woman, was far from sharing his taste.

So when Monsieur de Camps spoke of going to the Porte Saint-Martin to see a fairy piece that was attracting all Paris, his wife replied:

"Neither I nor Madame de l'Estorade have any wish to go out. We are very tired with our expedition, and will give up our places to Naïs and René, who will enjoy the marvels of the *Rose-fairy* far more than we should."

The two children awaited the ratification of this plan with such anxiety as may be imagined. Their mother made no objection; and thus, a few minutes later, the two ladies, who since Madame de Camps' arrival in Paris had not once been able to escape from their surroundings for a single chat, found themselves left to an evening of confidential talk.

"Not at home to anybody," said Madame de l'Estorade to Lucas, when the party were fairly off.

Then, taking as her starting-point the last words spoken by Madame de Camps before dinner:

"You really have, my dear friend," said she, "a stock of the sharpest little arrows, which go as straight to their mark as so many darts."

"Now that we are alone," replied Madame Octave, "I am going to deal you blows with a bludgeon; for, as you may suppose, I have not traveled two hundred leagues and abandoned the care of our business, which Monsieur de Camps has trained me to manage very competently when he is absent, only to tell you sugared truths."

"I am willing to hear anything from you," said Madame de l'Estorade, pressing her friend's hand—her dear conscience-keeper, as she called her.

"Your last letter simply frightened me."

"Why? Because I myself told you that this man frightened me, and that I would find some means of keeping him at a distance?".

"Yes. Until then I had doubted what my advice ought to be; but from that moment I became so uneasy about you, that, in spite of all Monsieur de Camps' objections to my making the journey, I was determined to come—and here I am."

"But, I assure you, I do not understand——"

"Well, supposing Monsieur de Camps, Monsieur Marie-Gaston—or even Monsieur de Rastignac, though his visits intoxicate your husband with delight—were either of them to get into the habit of calling, would it disturb you as much?"

"No, certainly not; but neither of these men has any such claim on me as this man has."

"Do you believe, tell me truly, that Monsieur de Sallenauve is in love with you?"

"No. I believe, I am perfectly certain, that he is not; but I also believe that on my part——"

"We will come to that presently. What I want to know now is whether you wish that Monsieur de Sallenauve should fall in love with you?"

"God forbid!"

"Well, an excellent way of drawing him to your heel is to hurt his conceit, to be unjust and ungrateful—to compel him, in short, to think about you."

"But is not that a rather far-fetched notion, my dear?"

"Why, my dear child, have you never observed that men, if they have any subtlety of feeling, are more readily caught by severity than by softness; that we plant ourselves most solidly in their minds by a stern attitude; that they are very like those little lap-dogs who never want to bite till you snatch away your hand?"

"If that were the case, every man we scorn and never even think of glancing at would be a lover!"

"Now, my dear, do not put nonsense into my mouth. It is self-evident that in order to catch fire a man must be predisposed to combustion; that, to go to a man's head there must be some beginnings of a fancy on both sides; and it seems to me that between you and Monsieur de Sallenauve there has been ample introduction! Though he may not love you, he loves your semblance; and, as you said the other day, wittily enough, what is there to prevent him, now that the other is evidently lost beyond recall, from a *ricochet* into love for you?"

"But, on the contrary, he has better hopes than ever of finding the lady, by the help of a very clever seeker who is making inquiry."

"Well and good; but supposing he should not find her for a long time to come, are you to spend the time in getting him on your hands?"

"Dear Dame Morality, I do not at all accept your theory, at any rate so far as he is concerned: he will be very busy; he will be far more devoted to the Chamber than to me; he is a man of high self-respect, who would be disgusted by such mean behavior on my part, and think it supremely unjust and ungrateful; and if I try to put two feet of distance between us, he will put four, you may be quite certain."

"But you, my dear?" said her friend.

"How—I?"

"Yes—you who are not so busy, who have not the Chamber to absorb you, who have—I will allow—plenty of self-respect, but who know as much about affairs of the heart as a school-girl or a wet-nurse—what is to become of you under the perilous regimen you propose to follow?"

"I!—If I do not love him when I see him, I shall still less love him when he is absent."

"So that if you found him accepting this ostracism with indifference, your woman's pride would not be in the least shocked?"

"Of course not; it is that I aim at."

"And supposing, on the other hand, that he complains of your behavior, or without complaining, suffers acutely, will your conscience have really nothing to say to you?"

"It will say that I have acted for the best—that I could not do otherwise."

"And if his success is so great that it comes to your ears, if his name fills all the hundred mouths of Fame, you will still forget his existence?"

"I shall think of him as I do of Monsieur Thiers or Monsieur Berryer."

"And Naïs, who dreams only of him, and who will say even more emphatically than on the day when he first dined with you, 'How well he talks, mamma!'"

"Oh! if you take a child's silly chatter into account——"

"And Monsieur de l'Estorade, who annoys you already when, in his blind devotion to party spirit, he utters some ill-natured insinuation about Monsieur de Sallenauve—will you silence him on every occasion when he is perpetually talking about this man, denying his talents, his public spirit?—You know the verdict men always pronounce on those who do not agree with their opinions."

"In short," said Madame de l'Estorade, "you mean to say that I shall never be so much tempted to think of him as when he has gone quite out of my ken?"

"What has happened to you once, my dear, when he followed you about, and his sudden disappearance surprised you, like the silence when a drum that has been deafening you for an hour on end abruptly stops its clatter."

"In that there was reason. His absence upset a plan."

"Listen to me, my dear," said Madame de Camps gravely; "I have read and re-read your letters. In them you were more

natural and less argumentative; and they left me one clear impression—that Monsieur de Sallenauve had certainly touched your heart if he had not invaded it."

At a gesture of denial from Madame de l'Estorade, her strenuous Mentor went on:

"I know you have fortified yourself against such a notion. And how could you admit to me what you have so carefully concealed from yourself? But the thing that is, *is*. You cannot feel the magnetic influence of a man; you cannot be aware of his gaze—even without meeting his eyes; you cannot exclaim, 'You see, madame, I am invulnerable to love,' without having been more or less hit already."

"But so many things have happened since I wrote those preposterous things!"

"It is true, he was only a sculptor, and now, in the course of time, he may possibly be in the Ministry, like—I will not say Monsieur de Rastignac, for that is not saying much, but like Canalis the great poet."

"I like a sermon to have some conclusion," said Madame de l'Estorade pettishly.

"You say to me," replied Madame de Camps, "exactly what Vergniaud said to Robespierre on the 31st of May, for in the solitude of our wilderness I have been reading the history of the French Revolution; and I rely in Robespierre's words, 'Yes, I am coming to the conclusion'—a conclusion against your pride as a woman, who having reached the age of two-and-thirty without suspecting what love might be even in married life, cannot admit that at so advanced an age she should yield to the universal law; against the memory of all your sermons to Louise de Chaulieu, proving to her that there is no misfortune so great as a passion that captures the heart—very much as if you were to argue that an inflammation of the lungs was the worst imprudence a sick man could commit; against your appalling ignorance, which conceives that merely saying *'I will not'* in a resolute tone is stronger than an inclination complicated by a concurrence of circumstances from which the cleverest woman, my cousin the

Princesse de Cadignan let us say, could scarcely shake herself free."

"But the practical conclusion?" said Madame de l'Estorade, impatiently patting her knee with her pretty hand.

"My conclusion is this," replied her friend. "I do not really see any danger of your drowning unless you are so foolish as to try to stem the stream. You are firm-tempered, you have good principles, and are religious; you worship your children, and for their sakes you esteem their father Monsieur de l'Estorade, who has now for more than fifteen years been the companion of your life. With so much ballast you will not upset, and, believe me, you are well afloat."

"Well, then?" said Madame de l'Estorade.

"Well, then, there is no necessity for violent efforts, with very doubtful results, in my opinion, to preserve an unmoved attitude under impossible conditions, when you have already to a great extent abandoned it. You are quite sure that Monsieur de Sallenauve will never think of inviting you to take a step further; you have said that he is leagues away from thinking of such a thing. Keep still then where you are; make no barricades when nobody it attacking you; do not excite yourself over a useless defence which would only involve you in painful tempests of feeling and conscience, while endeavoring to pacify your conscience and bring peace to your heart just rippled by a breath of wind.

"The bond of friendship between man and woman always, no doubt, bears some hue of the usually warmer sentiments that exist between the two sexes; but it is not a mere empty illusion, nor an ever-yawning gulf. If Louise de Chaulieu and her adorable first husband had lived, were you not already on such a footing of intimacy with him as never existed between you and any other man? And now, with her second husband, Monsieur Marie-Gaston, are you not on quite exceptional terms in memory of the friend you have lost? And even with the escort of your little girl, my husband, and myself, would you have thought of paying the kindly visit we carried out to-day to the first comer, just anybody, without some previous knowledge and recommendation?"

"Then I am to make a friend of Monsieur de Sallenauve?" said Madame de l'Estorade pensively.

"Yes, my dear, to save yourself from his becoming a fixed idea—a regret—a remorse—three things which poison life."

"With the world looking on; with my husband, who has already had one fit of jealousy!"

"My dear, you may compromise yourself just as much or more in the eyes of the world by your efforts to mislead it as by the liberty you frankly allow yourself. Do not imagine, for instance, that your abrupt departure last evening from the Rastignacs', in order to avoid any discussion of your obligations to Monsieur de Sallenauve, can have escaped observation? And would not calmer demeanor have more effectually disguised the sense of indebtedness which you displayed, on the contrary, by so much agitation?"

"In that you are quite right.—But some people's impudence when they talk has the gift of putting me beside myself——"

"Your husband is, I think, somewhat altered, and not for the better. What used to be attractive in him was the perfect respect, the unlimited deference he showed for your person, your ideas, your impressions, everything about you; that sort of dog-like submissiveness gave him a dignity he had no idea of, for there is real greatness in knowing how to obey and to admire. I may be mistaken, but I think politics have spoilt him; as you cannot fill his seat in the Upper Chamber, it has dawned on his mind that he could quite well live without you. In your place I should keep a sharp eye on such fancies for independence; and since this question is the order of the day, I should make it a cabinet question on the point of Monsieur de Sallenauve."

"But do you know, my dear friend," said Madame de l'Estorade, laughing, "that you are delightfully pestilential, and that if I acted on your advice I should bring down fire and sword?"

"Not at all, my child; I am simply a woman of five-and-forty, who has always looked on things in their practical

aspect; and I did not marry my husband, to whom I am passionately attached, till I was well assured, by putting him to a severe test, that he also was worthy of my esteem. It is not I who make life what it is; I take it as I find it, trying to bring order and *possibility* into the incidents that may occur. I am not frantic passion like Louise de Chaulieu, nor am I exaggerated good sense like Renée de l'Estorade. I am a sort of Jesuit in petticoats, convinced that rather wide sleeves are more serviceable than sleeves that are too tight about the wrists; and I never set my heart on the Quest of the Absolute."

At this moment Lucas opened the drawing-room door and announced Monsieur de Sallenauve. As his mistress gave the old man a look as much as to ask him how he dared take so little account of her orders, Lucas replied with a shrug, which seemed to say that this visitor was an article he could not have supposed would be included in the code of prohibition.

As Sallenauve took his seat in a chair the man pushed forward for him:

"You see," Madame de Camps whispered to her friend, "the servants even have an instinctive idea that he is not a mere *anybody*."

Madame de Camps, who had never met the new deputy, devoted her whole attention to studying him, and saw no reason to repent of preaching that he was not to be outraged. Sallenauve accounted for his visit by his anxious curiosity to know how matters had gone off at Ville-d'Avray; if he should hear that Marie-Gaston had been too much upset, he was quite prepared, though it was already late, to set out at once and join him.

As to the business that had occupied his day, he had as yet had no form of success. He had availed himself of his title of Deputy, a sort of universal pass-key, to interview the prefect of police, who had referred him to Monsieur de Saint-Estève of the detective department. Sallenauve, knowing, as all Paris knew, the past history of this man, was amazed

to find him an official of good manners. But the great detective had not given him much hope.

"A woman hidden in Paris," said he, "is literally an eel hidden in the deepest hole."

He himself, with the help of Jacques Bricheteau, meant to continue the search during the whole of the next day; but if, by the evening, neither he nor the great official inquisitor had discovered anything, he was determined to go then to Ville-d'Avray to be with Marie-Gaston, concerning whom he was far more uneasy than Madame de l'Estorade was.

As he said good-night, before the return of Monsieur de l'Estorade and Monsieur de Camps—who was to call for his wife:

"Do not forget," said Madame de l'Estorade, "that Naïs' party is on the evening after to-morrow. You will offend her mortally if you fail to appear. Try to persuade Marie-Gaston to come with you; it will be a little diversion at any rate."

On coming in from the theatre, Monsieur Octave de Camps declared that it would be many a long day before he would ever go to another fairy extravaganza. Naïs, on the contrary, still bewitched by the marvels she had seen, began to give an eager report of the play, which showed how deeply it had struck her young imagination.

As Madame de Camps went away with her husband, she remarked:

"That little girl would make me very anxious; she reminds me of Moïna d'Aiglemont. Madame de l'Estorade has brought her on too fast, and I should not be surprised if in the future she gave them some trouble."

It is difficult to fix the exact date in the history of modern manners, when a sort of new religion had its rise which may be called the worship of children. Nor would it be any easier to determine what the influence was under which this cultus acquired the extensive vogue it has now attained. But while

it remains inexplicable, the fact exists, and must be recorded by every faithful chronicler of the greater and minor impulses of social life.

Children now fill the place in the family which was held among the ancients by the household gods; and the individual who should fail to share this devotion would be thought not so much a fractious and cross-grained person, perverse and contradictory, as simply an atheist. The influence of Rousseau, however—who for a while persuaded all mothers to suckle their infants—has now died out; still, he must be a superficial observer who would find a contradiction in this to the next remark. Any one who has ever been present at the tremendous deliberations held over the choice of a wet nurse to live in the house, and understood the position this queen of the nursery at once takes up in the arrangements of the household, may be quite convinced that the mother's renunciation of her rights is on her part only the first of many acts of devotion and self-sacrifice. The doctor and the accoucheur, whom she does not try to influence, declare that she is not equal to the task; and it is an understood thing that, solely for the sake of the being she has brought into the world, she resigns herself to the inevitable. But, then, having secured for the child what schoolmasters describe as excellent and abundant board, what frantic care and anxiety surround it! How often is the doctor called up at night to certify that the mildest indigestion is not an attack of much-dreaded croup! How often is he snatched away from the bedside of the dying, and urgently plied with agonized questions by a mother in tears, who fancies that her cherub looks *peeky* or *pasty,* or has not soiled its napkins quite as usual!

At last the baby has got over this first difficult stage; released from the wet nurse's arms, it no longer wears a Henri IV. hat, bedizened with plumes and tufts like an Andalusian mule; but then the child, and its companions, still remind us of Spain: dedicated to the Virgin and arrayed in white, they might be taken for young statues of the *Commendatore* in the opera of *Don Giovanni.* Others, reminding us of Walter

Scott and the "White Lady," look as if they had come down from the Highlands, of which they display the costume—the short jacket and bare knees.

More often the sweet idols supply in their dress what M. Ballanche would have called a palingenesis of national history. As we see, in the Tuileries, hair cut square *à la* Charles VI., the velvet doublets, lace and embroidered collars, the Cavalier hats, short capes, ruffles and shoes with roses, of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., we can go through a course of French history related by tailors and dressmakers with stricter exactitude than by Mézeray and President Hénault.

Next come anxieties, if not as to the health, at any rate as to the constitution of our little household gods—for they are always so delicate; and to strengthen them, a journey every year to the sea, or the country, or the Pyrenees, is imperatively ordered. And, of course, during the five or six months spent by the mother in these hygienic wanderings, the husband, if he is detained in Paris, must make the best of his widowhood, of his empty and dismantled house, and the upheaval of all his habits.

Winter, however, brings the family home again; but do you suppose that these precious darlings, puffed up with precocity and importance, can be amused, like the children born in the ages of heartless infanticide, with rattles, dolls, and twopenny Punches? What next, indeed! The boys must have ponies, cigarettes, and novels; the little girls must be allowed to play on a grand scale at being grown-up mistress of the house; they give afternoon dances, and evening parties with the genuine *Guignol* puppets from the Champs-Élysées, or Robert Houdin promised on the invitation card; nor are these like Lambert and Molière, you may depend on it; once on the programme, they are secured.

Finally, now and again these little autocrats, like Naïs de l'Estorade, get leave to give a party on a sufficiently grown-up scale to make it necessary to engage a few police to guard the door; while at Nattier's, at Delisle's, and at Prévost's the event casts its shadow before in the purchase of silks,

artificial flowers, and real bouquets for the occasion. From what we have seen of Naïs, it will be understood that no one was more capable than she of filling the part and the duties that devolved on her by her mother's temporary abdication in her favor of all her power and authority.

This abdication had dated from some days before the evening now arrived; for it was Mademoiselle Naïs de l'Estorade who, in her own name, had requested the guests to do her the honor of spending the evening with her; and as Madame de l'Estorade would not carry the parody to such a length as to allow the cards to be printed, Naïs had spent several days in writing these invitations, taking care to add in the corner the sacramental formula *"Dancing."*

Nothing could be stranger, or, as Madame Octave de Camps would have said, more alarming than the perfect coolness of this little girl of thirteen, standing, as she had seen her mother do on similar occasions, at the drawing-room door, and toning the warmth of her welcome to the finest shades as she received her guests, from the most affectionate cordiality to a coolness verging on disdain. With her bosom friends she warmly shook hands *à l'Anglaise;* for others, she had smiles graduated for different degrees of intimacy; a bow or nod to those whom she did not know or care for; and from time to time the most amusing little motherly air and pet words for the tiny ones who are necessarily included in these juvenile routs, difficult and perilous as such company is to manage.

To the fathers and mothers of her guests, as the party was not given for them, and she was acting strictly on the Evangelical precept, *Sinite parvulos venire ad me,* Naïs aimed at distant but respectful politeness. But when Lucas, reversing the usual order of things, in obedience to her instructions, announced, "Mesdemoiselles de la Roche-Hugon, Madame la Baronne de la Roche-Hugon, and Madame la Comtesse de Rastignac," the cunning little puss abandoned this studied reserve; she rushed forward to meet the Minister's wife, and, with the prettiest possible grace, she seized her hand and kissed it.

Monsieur and Madame de l'Estorade also pressed forward to welcome their unexpected visitor; and without allowing her to make any apology as to the liberty she had taken in coming with her sister-in-law without an invitation, they led her to a good seat, whence she could have a complete view of the proceedings, by this time of a very lively character.

Naïs could not accept every invitation to dance which the elegant little dandies vied with each other in pressing on her, and, indeed, she got a little confused over the order of her engagements. In spite of the famous *"entente cordiale,"* her heedlessness was near causing a revival of the perennial rivalry of France and perfidious Albion. A quadrille promised twice over, to a young English nobleman, aged ten, and a boy from a preparatory naval school—Barniol's school—was about to result in something more than railing accusations, for the young heir to the English peerage had already doubled his fist in attitude to box.

This squabble being settled, another disaster befel: a very small boy, seeing the servant bring in a tray of cakes and cooling drinks after a polka, which had made him very hot, was anxious to refresh himself; but as he was too short to reach the level at which the objects of his desire were held by the footman, he unfortunately tried clinging to the rim of the tray to bring it within reach; the tray tilted, lost its balance, and one of its corners serving as a gutter, there flowed, as from the urn of a mythological river-god, a sort of cascade of mingled orgeat, currant-syrup, and capillaire, of which the fountain-head was the overturned glasses. It would have been well if only the rash infant himself had suffered from the sudden sticky torrent; but in the confusion caused by the catastrophe, ten innocent victims were severely splashed, among them five or six infant bacchantes, who, enraged at seeing their garments stained, seemed ready to make a second Orpheus of the luckless blunderer.

While he was rescued with difficulty from their hands, and delivered over to those of a German governess, who had hastened to the scene of the uproar:

"What could Naïs be thinking of," said a pretty, fair-haired little girl to a youthful Highlander with whom she had been dancing all the evening, "to invite little children no bigger than that?"

"Oh, I quite understand," said the Highlander; "he is a little boy belonging to the Accountant Office people; Naïs was obliged to ask him on account of his parents; it was a matter of civility."

At the same time putting his hand through a friend's arm:

"I say, Ernest," he went on, "I could smoke a cigar! Suppose we try and find a corner out of all this riot."

"I cannot, my dear fellow," replied Ernest mysteriously. "You know that Léontine always makes a scene when she finds out that I have been smoking. She is in the sweetest mood to-night. There, look what she has just given me!"

"A horse-hair ring, with two flaming hearts!" said the Highlander scornfully. "Why, every schoolboy makes them!"

"Then, pray, what have you to show?" retorted Ernest, much nettled.

"Oh!" said the Highlander, "better than that."

And with a consequential air he took out of the sporran, which formed part of his costume, a sheet of scented blue paper.

"There," said he, holding it under Ernest's nose, "just smell that."

Ernest, with conspicuous lack of delicacy, snatched at the note and got possession of it; the Highlander, in a rage, struggled to get it back. Then Monsieur de l'Estorade intervened, and having not the remotest suspicion of the cause of the fray, separated the combatants, so that the spoiler could enjoy the fruits of his crime unmolested in a corner. The paper was blank. The young rascal had stolen the sheet of scented paper that morning from his mamma's blotting-book—she perhaps would have made some less immaculate thing of it.

Ernest presently returned it to the Highlander:

"Here; I give you back your letter," said he, in a tone of derision. "It is desperately compromising!"

"Keep it, sir," replied the other. "I will ask you for it to-morrow under the chestnut-trees in the Tuileries. Meanwhile, you must understand that we can have nothing more to say to each other!"

Ernest's demeanor was less chivalrous. His only reply was to put the thumb of his right hand to his nose, spreading his fingers, and turning an imaginary handle—an ironical demonstration which he had learned from seeing it performed by his mother's coachman. Then he went off to find his partner for a quadrille that was being formed.

But why are we wasting time over such trivialities when we know that interests of a superior order are obscurely working themselves out beneath this childish surface?

Sallenauve, who had returned at about four in the afternoon from spending two days at Ville-d'Avray, could not give Madame de l'Estorade a good report of his friend. Under a mask of cold resignation, Marie-Gaston was in deep dejection; and the most serious cause of anxiety, because it was so unnatural, was that he had not yet been to visit his wife's grave; it was as though he foresaw the risk of such agitation as he really dared not face. This state of mind had so greatly disturbed Sallenauve, that, but for fear of really distressing Naïs by not appearing at her ball, he would not have left his friend, who was by no means to be persuaded to come to Paris with him.

It really seemed as though Marie-Gaston had expended his remaining powers in the perfervid enthusiasm and cheerfulness to which he had wound himself up during the Arcis election, and that now the most disastrous prostration had set in as a reaction from the excitement of which his letters to Madame de l'Estorade were but a faint reflection. One thing, however, had made Sallenauve feel that his patient was safe during the few hours of his absence; before he had fully decided to come away, an English gentleman had been an-

nounced whom Marie-Gaston had known in Florence, and whose arrival he hailed with apparent joy. So some happy effect might perhaps be hoped for from this unforeseen visit.

To divert Sallenauve's mind from these anxieties—and, in fact, she thought them exaggerated—Madame de l'Estorade at once made him acquainted with Monsieur Octave de Camps, who had expressed a strong wish to know him; and by the time the deputy had been conversing a quarter of an hour with the ironmaster, he had quite won this gentleman's good opinion by the extent of his knowledge in metallurgy.

It may be remembered that one of Bixiou's chief grievances against Dorlange had been the sculptor's ambition, if not indeed to know everything, at any rate to examine everything. During the last year especially Sallenauve, having spent no time in his art but what was needed for the "Saint Ursula," had been at leisure to devote himself to the scientific studies which justify a parliamentary representative in speaking with authority when they can serve to support or illustrate his political views.

Hence, though in talking to Monsieur Godivet, the Registrar of Taxes at Arcis, he had modestly expressed himself as ignorant of the details of that official's functions, he had given his attention to the various elements on which they bore—the customs, conveyancing-fees, stamps, and direct or indirect taxes. Then, in turning to the science—so problematical, and yet so self-confident that it has assumed a name—Political Economy, Sallenauve had studied with no less care the various sources which contribute to form the mighty river of the nation's wealth; and the branch of the subject relating to mines, the matter just now of preponderating interest to Monsieur de Camps, had not been neglected. The ironmaster had been so exclusively interested in the question of iron ores, that he had much to learn in the other branches of metallurgy, and his delight may be imagined on hearing from the newly-made deputy a sort of *Arabian Nights'* tale of the riches of the land, though, certified by science, there could be no doubt of the facts.

"Do you mean, monsieur," cried Monsieur de Camps, "that besides our coal and iron mines we have deposits of copper, lead, and even of silver?"

"If you will only consult some specialist, he will tell you that the famous mines of Bohemia and Saxony, of Russia and of Hungary, are not to be compared to those that exist in the Pyrenees; in the Alps from Briançon to the Isère; in the Cevennes, especially about the Lozère; in the Puy-de-Dôme; in Brittany and in the Vosges. In the Vosges, not far from the town of Saint-Dié, I can tell you of a single vein of silver ore that runs with a width of from fifty to eighty mètres for a distance of about eight miles."

"How is it, then, that this mineral wealth has never been worked?"

"It was, at one time," said Sallenauve, "at a distant period, especially during the Roman dominion in Gaul. These mines were abandoned at the fall of the Roman Empire, but worked again during the Middle Ages by the clergy and the lords of the soil; then, during the struggle between the feudal nobles and the sovereign, and the long civil wars which devastated the country, the working was given up, and no one has taken it up since."

"And you are sure of the facts?"

"Ancient writers, Strabo and others, all speak of these mines; the tradition of their working survives in the districts where they lie; imperial decrees and the edicts of kings bear witness to their existence and to the value of their output; and in some places there is still more practical evidence in excavations of considerable length and depth, shafts and caverns hewn out of the living rock, and all the traces which bear witness to the vast undertakings that immortalized Roman enterprise. To this may be added the evidence of modern geological science, which has everywhere confirmed and amplified these indications."

Monsieur de Camps' imagination had been sufficiently fired by the prospects of a mere iron-mine to bring him to Paris as a petitioner to a Government he despised, and at the sug-

gestion of all this buried wealth it positively blazed; he was about to ask his informant what his ideas might be as to the process of extracting the treasure that was so strangely neglected, when, by a coincidence for which the reader is prepared, Lucas threw open the drawing-room door, and announced in his loudest and most impressive tones, "Monsieur the Minister of Public Works."

The effect on the assembly was electrical; it even broke in on the *tête-à-tête* of the two new friends.

"Let us have a look at this little Rastignac who has blossomed into a public personage," said Monsieur de Camps disdainfully, as he rose.

But in his heart it struck him that this was an opportunity of getting hold of the inaccessible Minister; in virtue of the sound principle that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush, he left the hidden fortune revealed to him by Sallenauve to rest in peace, and went back to his iron-mine. Sallenauve, on his part, foresaw an introduction to be inevitable; it seemed to him impossible but that Monsieur de l'Estorade's Conservative zeal would contrive to bring it about.

And what would his allies of the Opposition say to the news, which would certainly be reported on the morrow, that a representative of the Extreme Left had been seen in a drawing-room in conversation with a Minister so noted for his ardor and skill in making political proselytes? Sallenauve had already had a taste of his party's ideas of tolerance in the office of the *National;* he had heard it insinuated that the affectation of moderation promised by his profession of political faith was not to be taken literally as to his parliamentary conduct; that, in fact, he would soon find himself deserted if he should attempt to make his practice agree with his theories.

Anxious as he was, too, about Marie-Gaston, having put in an appearance at Naïs' party, he was eager now to return to Ville-d'Avray, and for all these reasons he determined to profit by the general excitement and beat a retreat. By quiet and simple tactics he got round to the door, and hoped to escape without being observed. But he had reckoned without Naïs,

to whom he had promised a quadrille. The instant he laid his hand on the door-handle the little girl sounded the alarm, and Monsieur de l'Estorade, with what precipitancy may be imagined, took her part to detain the deserter. Seeing that his ruse had failed, Sallenauve dared not commit himself to a retreat which would have been in bad taste by assuming an importance suggestive of political priggishness; so he took his chance of what might happen, and allowing himself to be reinstated on Naïs' list of partners, he remained.

Monsieur de l'Estorade knew Sallenauve to be too clever a man to become the dupe of any finessing he might attempt to throw him in the Minister's way. He therefore acted with perfect simplicity; and a quarter of an hour after Monsieur de Rastignac's arrival, they came to the deputy arm in arm, the host saying:

"Monsieur de Rastignac, Minister of Public Works, has desired me before the battle begins to introduce him to one of the generals of the hostile force."

"Monsieur le Ministre does me too much honor," said Sallenauve ceremoniously. "Far from being a general, I am but one of the humblest and least known of the rank and file."

"Nay!" said the Minister, "the fight at Arcis-sur-Aube was no small victory; you sent our men pretty smartly to the right about, monsieur."

"There was nothing very astonishing in that, monsieur; as you may have heard, we had a Saint on our side."

"At any rate," replied Rastignac, "I prefer such an issue to that which had been planned for us by a man whom I had believed to be more capable, and whom we sent down to the scene of action. That Beauvisage would seem to be hopelessly stupid; he would have reflected on us if we had got him in; and, after all, he was only Left Centre, like that lawyer Giguet. Now the Left Centre is in fact our worst enemy, because, while traversing our politics, it aims principally at getting into office."

"Oh!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "from what you were told of the man, he would have been whatever he was bidden to be."

"No, no, my dear fellow, don't fancy that. Fools often cling more closely than you might believe to the flag under which they have enlisted. Going over to the enemy implies a choice, and that means a rather complicated mental process; obstinacy is far easier."

"I quite agree with the Minister," said Sallenauve; "the extremes of innocence and cunning are equally proof against being talked over."

"You kill your man kindly," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, patting Sallenauve on the shoulder.

Then seeing, or pretending to see, in the mirror over the chimney-shelf by which they stood, a signal that he was wanted:

"Coming," said he over his shoulder, and having thus thrown the foes together, he went off, as if he were required for some duty as host.

Sallenauve was determined not to look like a school-girl frightened out of her wits at the notion of being left alone with a gentleman; since they had met, he would put a good face on the matter, and, speaking at once, he asked whether the Ministry had any large number of bills to lay before the Houses, which would meet a few days hence.

"No, very few," replied Rastignac. "We honestly did not expect to remain in office; we appealed to an election because in the confusion of public opinion forced on by the Press, we felt it our duty to bring it to its bearings, and compel it to know its own mind by requiring it to declare itself. We had no hope of the result proving favorable to ourselves; and the victory, it must be confessed, finds us quite unprepared."

"Like the peasant," said Sallenauve, laughing, "who, expecting the end of the world, did not think it worth while to sow his field."

"Oh!" said Rastignac modestly, "we did not regard our retirement as the end of the world. We believe that there will be men after us, and many of them, perfectly able to govern; only, in that temporary sojourn known as office, as we expected to give very few performances, we did not unpack

our scenery and dresses. The session was not in any case to be one of business; the question now to be decided is between what is called the Château, the personal influence of the sovereign, and parliamentary supremacy. This question will inevitably come to the front when we are required to ask for the secret service fund. When it has been settled one way or the other, when the budget is passed, and a few acts of minor importance, Parliament will have got through its task with credit, for it will have put an end to a heartbreaking struggle, and the country will know once for all to which of the two powers it is to look with assurance for the promotion of its prosperity."

"Then you think," said Sallenauve, "that this is a very useful question to settle in the economy of a constitutional government?"

"Well, it was not we who raised it," said Rastignac. "It is perhaps the outcome of circumstances; and, to a great extent, of the impatience of some ambitious men, and of party tactics."

"So that, in your opinion, sir, one of those powers is in no respect to blame, and has nothing whatever to repent of?"

"You are a Republican," replied Rastignac, "and consequently *à priori* an enemy of the dynasty. It would be, I conceive, pure waste of time on my part to try to rectify your ideas as to the course of conduct of which you accuse it."

"You are quite mistaken," said the supporter of the theoretical, imaginable future republic. "I have no preconceived hatred of the reigning dynasty. I even think that in its past history, variegated, if I may say so, with royal relationship and revolutionary impulses, there are all the elements that should commend it to the liberal and monarchical instincts of the people. At the same time, you will fail to convince me that the present head of the royal family is untainted by those extravagant notions of personal prerogative which, in the long run, must undermine, disfigure, and wreck the most admirable and the strongest institutions."

"Yes," said Rastignac sarcastically, "their salvation is to

be found in the famous saying of the member for Sancerre, 'The King reigns; he does not govern!' "

Whether it was that he was tired of standing, or that he wished to show that he was quite at his ease in avoiding the pitfall that had so evidently been laid for him, Sallenauve, before he answered, pulled forward an armchair for the Minister, and, after seating himself, replied:

"Will you allow me, monsieur, to quote the example of another royal personage?—a Prince who was not thought to be indifferent to the prerogatives of his crown, and who certainly was not ignorant of constitutional procedure. In the first place, because, like our present King, he was not ignorant on any subject whatever; and, in the second place, because he himself had introduced the constitutional system into our country."

"Louis XVIII.," said Rastignac, "or, as the newspapers have it, 'The illustrious author of the Charter'?"

"Just so," said Sallenauve. "Now, let me ask you, where did he die?"

"At the Tuileries, of course."

"And his successor?"

"In exile.—I see your point."

"My point is not, in fact, very difficult to discern. But have you observed, sir, the inference to be drawn from that royal career—for which I, for my part, profess entire respect? Louis XVIII. was not a citizen king. He vouchsafed the Charter; it was not wrung from him. He was born nearer to the throne than the King whose unfortunate tendencies I have mentioned, and was bound to inherit a larger share of the ideas, infatuations, and prejudices of Court life. His person was laughable—and this in France means degeneracy; he had to make the best of a new régime following a government which had intoxicated the people with that fine gilded smoke called glory; also, if he was not actually brought in by foreigners, he at least came in at the heels of an invasion by Europe in arms. And now, shall I tell you why, in spite of his own original sin, and in spite of a standing conspiracy

against his rule, he was allowed to die in peace under his canopy at the Tuileries?"

"Because he was constitutional?" said Rastignac, with a shrug. "But can you say that we are not?"

"In the letter you are; in the spirit, no.—When Louis XVIII. placed his confidence in a prime minister, it was complete and entire; he played no underhand game, but supported him to the utmost. Witness the famous edict of the 5th of September, and the dismissal of the undiscoverable Chamber, which was more royalist than himself—a thing he was well advised enough to disapprove. Later, a revulsion of opinion shook the Minister who had prompted him to this action. That Minister was his favorite—his child, as he called him. No matter; yielding to constitutional necessity, after wrapping him in orders and titles, and everything that could deaden the shock of a fall, he courageously sent him abroad; and then he did not dig mines, or set watch, or try to make opportunities for surreptitiously recalling him to power. That Minister never held office again."

"For a man who does not hate Us," said Rastignac, "you are pretty hard upon Us. We are little short of forsworn to the constitutional compact, and Our policy, by your account, is ambiguous, and tortuous, and suggests a certain remote likeness to M. Doublemain, the clerk in the *Mariage de Figaro*."

"I would not say that the evil lay so deep, or came from so far," replied Sallenauve. "We are perhaps merely a busybody—only in the sense, of course, of loving to have a finger in everything."

"Well, monsieur, but if We were the cleverest politician in the kingdom!"

"That does hinder the kingdom—which is all the world—from having the luck now and again of being as clever as We are."

"On my word!" said Rastignac, in the tone which seems to emphasize the climax of a conversation, "I wish I could realize a dream——"

"Of what?" said Sallenauve.

"Of seeing you face to face with that meddlesome cleverness which you seem to me to hold so cheap."

"You know, monsieur, that three-quarters of every man's life are spent in imagining the impossible."

"Impossible! Why? Would you be the first Opposition member ever seen at the Tuileries?—And an invitation to dinner—quite publicly and ostensibly given—that would bring you near to what you judge so hardly from a distance——?"

"I should do myself the honor of refusing it, monsieur," and he accentuated *the honor* in such a way as to give his own meaning to the word.

"That is just like you, all you men of the Opposition," cried Rastignac, "refusing to see the light when the occasion offers—incapable of seeing it, in fact!"

"Do you see the light to any particular advantage, monsieur, when, in the evening, as you pass a druggist's shop, you get full in your eyes a glare from those gigantic glass jars which seem to have been invented expressly to blind people?"

"You are not afraid of Our beams, but of the dark lantern of your colleagues making their rounds."

"There is perhaps some truth in that, Monsieur le Ministre. A party, and the man who craves the honor of representing it, are like a married couple, who, if they are to get on together, must treat each other with mutual consideration, sincerity, and fidelity, in fact as well as in form."

"Then try to be moderate! Your dream, indeed, is far more impossible to realize than mine; you will have some experience yet of the consideration shown you by your chaste spouse."

"If there was any misfortune I might be certain of, it was that, no doubt."

"You think that! And you with the noble and generous feeling that is evident in you—can you even endure unmoved the slander which is perhaps already sharpening its darts?"

"Have you yourself, monsieur, never felt its sting? or, if

you have, did it turn you aside from the road you were following?"

"But if I were to tell you," said Rastignac, lowering his voice, "that I have already had occasion to decline certain officious proposals to stir the depths of your private life, on a side, which, being a little less open to daylight than the others, has seemed particularly adapted for the setting of a snare?"

"I will not thank you, sir, for merely doing yourself justice by scorning the attempts of these meddlers, who are neither of your party nor of mine—whose only party is that of their own low greed and interest. But even if by some impossible chance they had found a loophole through which to approach you, believe me, that any purpose sanctioned by my conscience would not have been in the least affected."

"Still, do but consider the constituent elements of your party: a rabble of disappointed schemers, of envious brutality, base imitators of '93, despots disguised as devotees of liberty."

"My party has not, and wants to *have*. Yours calls itself Conservative—and with good reason—its principal aim being to keep power, places, fortune, everything it has, in its clutches. But at bottom, monsieur, the cooking is the same: eat, but do not see the process; for, as la Bruyère says, 'If you see a meal anywhere but on a well-laid table, how foul and disgusting it is!' "

"But, at any rate, monsieur, We are not a blind alley—We lead to something. Now, the more you rise by superior character and intelligence, the less will you be allowed to get through with your horde of democrats in your train, for its triumph would mean not a mere change of policy, but a revolution."

"But who says that I want to get through, to arrive anywhere?"

"What, merely march without trying to attain!—A certain breadth of faculty not only gives a man the right to aim at the conduct of affairs, it makes it his duty."

"To keep an eye on those who conduct them is surely a useful function too, and, I may add, a very absorbing one."

"You do not imagine, my dear sir," said Rastignac, "that I should have taken so much trouble to convince Beauvisage; to be sure, it must be said that with him I should have had an easier task."

"One happy result will ensue from the introduction which chance has brought about," said Sallenauve. "We shall feel that we know each other, and in our future meetings shall be pledged to courtesy—which will not diminish the strength of our convictions."

"Then I am to tell the King, for I had special instructions from his Majesty——"

Rastignac could not finish the sentence which was his last cartridge, as it were; for, as the band played the introductory bars of a quadrille, Naïs rushed up to him, and, with coquettish courtesy, said:

"Monsieur le Ministre, I am very sorry, but you have taken possession of my partner, and you must give him up to me. I have his name down for the eleventh quadrille, and if I miss a turn it makes such dreadful confusion!"

"You will excuse me, monsieur," said Sallenauve, laughing. "You see I am not a very red Republican."

And he went with Naïs, who dragged him away by the hand.

Madame de l'Estorade had had a kindly thought. It had occurred to her that Sallenauve's good-natured consent to humor Naïs might cost his dignity a prick, so she had contrived that some papas and mammas should join in the quadrille he had been drawn into; and she herself, with the young Highlander, the hero of the blank billets-doux—who, little as she suspected it, was quite capable of making mischief for her—took the place of *vis-à-vis* to the little girl.

Naïs was beaming with pride and delight; and at a moment, when in the figure of the dance she had to take her mother's hand:

"Poor mamma," said she, giving it an ecstatic clutch, "but for *him* you would not have me here now!"

The sudden and unexpected impression of this reminiscence so startled Madame de l'Estorade that she was seized with a return of the nervous spasm that had attacked her at the sight of the child's narrow escape. She was obliged to take a seat, and seeing her turn pale, Sallenauve, Naïs, and Madame de Camp all three came up to know if she was ill.

"It is nothing," said Madame de l'Estorade, as she turned to Sallenauve—"only this child reminded me of our immense obligation to you. 'But for him,' she said to me, 'you would not have me here, poor mamma!'—And it is true, monsieur, but for your magnanimous courage, where would she be now?——"

"Come, come, be calm," said Madame Octave, hearing that her friend's voice was broken and hysterical. "Have you no sense that you can be so upset by a little girl's speech?"

"She has more feeling than we have," replied Madame de l'Estorade, throwing her arms round Naïs, who, with the rest, was saying, "Come, mamma, be calm."

"There is nothing in the world that she thinks more of than her preserver—while her father and I—we have hardly expressed our gratitude."

"Why, you have overwhelmed me, madame," said Sallenauve politely.

"Overwhelmed?" said Naïs, shaking her pretty head dubiously. "If any one had saved my daughter, I should treat him very differently!"

"Naïs," said Madame de Camps severely, "little girls should be seen and not heard when their opinion is not asked."

"What is the matter?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, who now joined the group.

"Nothing," said Madame de Camps. "Dancing made Renée a little giddy."

"And is she all right again?"

"Yes, I have quite recovered," replied Madame de l'Estorade.

"Then come to say good-night to Madame de Rastignac; she is just going."

In his eagerness to attend the Minister's wife, Monsieur de l'Estorade did not think of giving his arm to his own wife. Sallenauve offered her his. As they crossed the room, Monsieur de l'Estorade leading the way so that he could not hear, his wife said to Sallenauve:

"You were talking to Monsieur de Rastignac for a long time. He tried, no doubt, to convert you?"

"Do you think he has succeeded?" asked Sallenauve.

"No; but these attempts at inveiglement are always unpleasant. I can only beg you to believe that I was no party to the conspiracy. I am not such a frenzied Ministerialist as my husband."

"Nor am I such a rabid revolutionary as seems to be supposed."

"I only hope that these vexatious politics, which will bring you more than once into antagonism with Monsieur de l'Estorade, will not sicken you of including us among your friends."

"Nay, madame, that is an honor I can be only happy in."

"It is not honor but pleasure that I would have you look for," said Madame de l'Estorade eagerly. "I must parody Naïs—'If I had saved anybody's daughter, I should be less ceremonious.'"

And having said this, without waiting for a reply, she released her hand from Sallenauve's arm, and left him not a little surprised at her tone.

My readers will hardly be surprised to find Madame de l'Estorade so entirely obedient to Madame Octave's advice, ingenious perhaps rather than judicious. In fact, they must long since have suspected that the unimpressionable Countess had yielded to a certain attraction towards the man who had not only saved her child's life, but also appealed to her imagination through such singular and romantic accessory facts. No one but herself, it is quite certain, had been deluded into security by a conviction of Sallenauve's perfect indifference. The certainty of his not caring for her was, in

fact, the only snare into which she could trip; as a declared lover he would have been infinitely less dangerous.

On closer acquaintance, Madame de l'Estorade was far from being one of those imperturbable natures which can withstand every contagion of love outside the family circle. Her beauty was almost of the Spanish type, with eyes, of which her friend Louise de Chaulieu used to say that they ripened the peaches when they looked at them; her coldness, then, was not what medical men term congenital; it was acquired self-control. Married, and not for love, to a man whose intellectual poverty has been seen, she had, in opposition to an axiom of the comic opera, forced her contempt to take the form of affection; and by means of a certain atrophy of the heart into which she had drilled herself, she had succeeded till the present time, without ever stumbling, in making Monsieur de l'Estorade the happiest of husbands. To the same end she had fostered her maternal feeling to a hardly credible fervency, thus cheating her other instincts.

But in considering the success that had hitherto crowned her stern task, one of the first elements to be reckoned with was the *circumstance* of Louise de Chaulieu. To her that poor reasonless woman had been like the drunken slaves, by whose example the Spartans were wont to give a living lesson to their children, and a sort of tacit wager had existed between the two friends. Louise de Chaulieu having thrown herself into the part of unchecked passion, Renée had assumed that of sovereign reason; and to gain the stakes, she had exerted such brave good sense and prudence as, but for this incitement, would perhaps have seemed a far greater sacrifice. At the age she had now attained, with such confirmed habits of self-control, it is quite intelligible that if she had seen, advancing down the highroad, the temptation to love against which she had so loudly preached, she would at once have recognized and dismissed it. But here was a man who cared not for her, though he thought her beauty ideal, who perhaps loved another woman; a man who, after snatching her child from death, looked for no reward; who was dignified, reserved,

and absorbed in quite other interests—how, when he came into her life by a side path, was she to think of him as dangerous, or to refuse him from the first the calm cordiality of friendship?

Sallenauve, meanwhile, was on his way to Ville-d'Avray, whither he had set out in spite of the lateness of the hour, possessed by his fears for his friend. And this was what he was thinking about:

As he looked back on the incidents of the evening, the deputy, as may be supposed, attached no great importance either to Rastignac's attempts at gaining him, or to Naïs' impassioned demonstrations, which indeed could have no result but that of making him ridiculous; but he was far from being so indifferent to Madame de l'Estorade's effusive burst of gratitude; it was this perfervid expression of thanks that occupied his mind. Without having anything definite to complain of in the Countess' attitude, Sallenauve had certainly never found her at all warm in her regard, and he had formed the same estimate of her temper and character as the rest of the world around her. He had seen her as a woman of remarkable intellectual gifts, but paralyzed as to her heart, by her absorbing and exclusive passion for her children. "The ice-bound Madame de l'Estorade," Marie-Gaston had once called her, and it was correct if he had ever thought of making a friend of her—that is to say, of becoming her lover.

Nor was it only as regarded Madame de l'Estorade, but as regarded her husband too, that Sallenauve had doubted the future permanency of their alliance. "We shall quarrel over politics," he had told himself a dozen times, and the reader may remember one of his letters in which he had contemplated this conclusion with some bitterness. So when Madame de l'Estorade had seemed to encourage him to take up an attitude of more effusive intimacy with her, what had most surprised him was the marked distinction she had drawn between her husband's probable demeanor and her own. Before a woman would say with such agitation as she had put into the inviting words, "I only hope that these vexatious

politics will not disgust you with us as friends," she must have, Sallenauve thought, to speak so warmly, a warmer heart than she was generally credited with; and this profession of alliance was not, he felt sure, to be taken as a mere drawing-room civility, or the thoughtless utterance of a transient and shallow impulse, as the little nervous attack had been which had led to it all.

Having thus analyzed this somewhat serious flirtation, to repay Madame de l'Estorade's politeness the statesman did not scorn to descend to a remark, which was illogical, it must be owned, as regards his usual reserve, and certain memories of his past life. He recollected that more than once, at Rome, he had seen Mademoiselle de Lanty dance, and comparing the original with the duplicate, he could assure himself that, notwithstanding the difference in their age, the girl had not a more innocent air, nor had she struck him as more elegant and graceful.

And in view of this fact, will not the clear-sighted reader—who may some time since have begun to suspect that these two natures, apparently so restrained, so entrenched in their past experiences, might ultimately come into closer contact—discern a certain convergence of gravitation though hitherto scarcely perceptible? It was, if you please, solely out of deference to Madame de Camps' advice that Madame de l'Estorade had so completely modified her austere determination; still, short of admitting some slight touch of the sentiment her friend had hinted at, is it likely that she would have given such singular vehemence to her expression of grateful regard, or that a mere remark from a child would have strung her nerves up to such a point as to surprise her into the outburst?

On his part, not having taken advantage of the privileged position thus recklessly thrown open to him, our deputy was tempted to think, with a persistency which, if not very imprudent, was at least very unnecessary, of these superficial graces. Madame de Camps had spoken truly: "Friendship between a man and woman is neither an impossible dream

nor an ever-yawning gulf." But in practice, it must be said, that this sentiment, by which we delude ourselves, proves to be a very narrow and baseless bridge across a torrent, needing in those who hope to cross it without difficulty much presence of mind on both sides and nerves less sensitive than Madame de l'Estorade's; while it is a necessary precaution never to look to right and left, as Sallenauve had just been doing.

From this elaborate observation, subtle as it may appear, there is, it would seem, a conclusion to be drawn: namely, that there would presently be a rise of temperature between these two whose affinities were as yet so negative and so slow to develop.

However, on arriving at Ville-d'Avray, Sallenauve found himself face to face with a strange event; and who does not know how, in spite of our determination, events often disperse our maturest plans?

Sallenauve had not been mistaken in his serious anxiety as to his friend's mental condition.

When Marie-Gaston abruptly fled after his wife's death from the spot where that cruel parting had occurred, he would have been wise to pledge himself never to see it again. Nature and Providence have willed it that in presence of the stern decrees of Death he who is stricken through the person of those he loves, if he accepts the stroke with the resignation demanded under the action of every inevitable law, does not for long retain the keen stamp of the first impression. In his famous letter against suicide, Rousseau says: "Sadness, weariness, regret, despair are but transient woes which never take root in the soul, and experience exhausts the feeling of bitterness which makes us think that our sorrow must be eternal."

But this is no longer true for those rash beings who, trying to escape from the first grip of the jaws of grief, evade it either by flight or by some immoderate diversion. All mental suffering is a kind of illness for which time is a specific, and which presently wears itself out, like everything violent. If, on the contrary, instead of being left to burn itself out slowly on the spot, it is fed by change of scene or other extreme meas-

ures, the action of Nature is hampered. The sufferer deprives himself of the balm of comparative forgetfulness promised to those who can endure; he merely transforms into a chronic disease, less visible perhaps, but more deeply seated, an acute attack, thrown in by checking its healthy crisis. The imagination sides with the heart, and, as the heart is by nature limited while the fancy is boundless, there is no possibility of calculating the violence of the excesses by which a man may be carried away under its ere long absolute dominion.

Marie-Gaston, as he wandered through this home where he had believed that after the lapse of two years he should find only the pathos of remembrance, had not taken a step, had not met with an object in his path that could fail to revive all his happiest days and at the same time the disaster that had ended them. The flowers his wife had loved, the lawns and trees—verdurous under the soft breath of spring, while she who had formed the lovely spot lay under the cold earth—all the dainty elegance brought together to decorate this exquisite nest for their love, combined to sing a chorus of lamentation, a long drawn wail of anguish in the ears of him who dared to breathe the dangerous atmosphere. Terrified when half-way by the overwhelming sorrow that had seized on him, Marie-Gaston, as Sallenauve had observed, had not dared accomplish the last station of his Calvary. In absence, he had calmly busied himself with drawing up an estimate for the private tomb he had intended to build for the remains of his beloved Louise; but here he could not endure even to do them pious homage in the village graveyard where they were laid.

The worst, in short, might be feared from a sorrow which, instead of being soothed by the touch of time, was, on the contrary, aggravated by duration, having as it seemed found fresh poison for its sting.

As Sallenauve approached this melancholy dwelling, thinking less of himself and of the joys or disappointments possibly in store for him, he was more and more vaguely anxious, and two or three times he urged the coachman to whip up his horses and get on faster.

The door was opened by Philippe, the old man who in Madame Marie-Gaston's time had been the house steward.

"How is your master?" asked Sallenauve.

"He is gone, sir," replied Philippe.

"Gone—where?"

"Yes, sir, with the English gentleman who was here when you left."

"But without a word for me, without telling you where they are gone?"

"After dinner, when all was well, my master suddenly said that he wanted a few things packed for a journey, and he saw to them himself. At the same time, the Englishman, after saying he would walk in the park and smoke a cigarette, mysteriously asked me where he could write a letter without being seen by my master. I took him into my own room, but I dared not ask him anything about this journey, for I never saw any one less communicative or open. When he had written the letter everything was ready; and then, without a word of explanation, the two gentlemen got into the English gentleman's chaise, and I heard them tell the coachman to drive to Paris——"

"But the letter?" said Sallenauve.

"It is addressed to you, sir, and the Englishman gave it me in secret, as he had written it."

"Then give it me, my good man!" cried Sallenauve; and without going any further than the hall where he had stood questioning Philippe, he hastily read it.

His features, as the man studied them, showed great distress.

"Tell them not to take the horses out," said he. And he read the letter through a second time.

When the old servant came back from delivering the order: "At what hour did they start?" Sallenauve inquired.

"At about nine o'clock."

"They have three hours' start," said he to himself, looking at his watch, which marked some minutes past midnight.

He turned to get into the carriage that was to take him



away again. Just as he was stepping into it, the steward ventured to ask, "There is nothing alarming, I hope, in that letter, sir?"

"No, nothing. But your master may be absent some little time; take care to keep the house in good order."

And then, like the two who had preceded him, he said: "To Paris."

Next morning, pretty early, Monsieur de l'Estorade was in his study very busy in a strange way. It may be remembered that Sallenauve had sent him a statuette of Madame de l'Estorade; he had never been able to find a place where the work stood to his mind in a satisfactory light. But ever since the hint given him by Rastignac that his friendship with the sculptor might serve him but ill at court, he had begun to agree with his son Armand that the artist had made Madame de l'Estorade look like a milliner's apprentice; and now, when by his obduracy to the Minister's inveiglements, Sallenauve had shown himself irreclaimably opposed to the Government, the statuette—its freshness a little dimmed, it must be owned, by the dust—no longer seemed presentable, and the worthy peer was endeavoring to discover a corner, in which it would be out of sight, so that he might not be required to tell the name of the artist, which every visitor asked, without making himself ridiculous by removing it altogether. So he was standing on the top step of a library ladder with the sculptor's gift in his hands and about to place it on the top of a tall cabinet. There the hapless sketch was to keep company with a curlew and a cormorant, shot by Armand during his last holidays. They were the first fruits of the young sportsman's prowess, and paternal pride had decreed them the honors of stuffing.

At this juncture Lucas opened the door to show in:

"Monsieur Philippe."

The worthy steward's age, and the confidential position he held in Marie-Gaston's household, had seemed to the l'Es-

torades' factotum to qualify him for the title of *Monsieur*—a civility to be, of course, returned in kind.

The master of the house, descending from his perch, asked Philippe what had brought him, and whether anything had happened at Ville-d'Avray. The old man described his master's strange departure, followed by the no less strange disappearance of Sallenauve, who had fled as if he were at the heels of an eloping damsel, and then he went on:

"This morning, as I was putting my master's room tidy, a letter fell out of a book, addressed to Madame la Comtesse. As it was sealed and ready to be sent off, I thought that, perhaps in the hurry of packing, my master had forgotten to give it me to post. At any rate, I have brought it; Madame la Comtess may, perhaps, finds that it contains some explanation of this unexpected journey—I have dreamed of nothing else all night."

Monsieur de l'Estorade took the letter.

"Three black seals!" said he, turning it over.

"It is not the color that startles me," said Philippe. "Since madame died, monsieur uses nothing but black; but I confess the three seals struck me as strange."

"Very good," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "I will give the letter to my wife."

"If there should be anything to reassure me about my master," said Philippe wistfully, "would you let me know, Monsieur le Comte?"

"You may rely on it, my good fellow.—Good-morning."

"I humbly beg pardon for having an opinion to offer," said the old servant, without taking the hint thus given him; "but for fear of there being any bad news in the letter, do not you think, Monsieur le Comte, that it would be well to know it, so as to prepare Madame la Comtesse?"

"Why! What! Do you suppose?——" Monsieur de l'Estorade began, without finishing his question.

"I do not know. My master has been very much depressed these last few days."

"It is always a very serious step to open a letter not ad-

dressed to oneself," said the Accountant-General. "This case is peculiar—the letter is addressed to my wife, but in fact was never sent to her—it is really a puzzling matter——"

"Still, if by reading it you could prevent something dreadful——"

"Yes—that is just what makes me hesitate."

Madame de l'Estorade settled the question by coming into the room. Lucas had told her of old Philippe's arrival.

"What can be the matter?" she asked, with uneasy curiosity. All Sallenauve's apprehensions of the night before recurred to her mind.

When the steward had repeated the explanations he had already given to Monsieur de l'Estorade, she unhesitatingly broke the seals.

"I know so much now," she said to her husband, who tried to dissuade her, "that the worst certainty would be preferable to the suspense we should be left in."

Whatever the contents of this alarming epistle, the Countess' face told nothing.

"And you say that your master went off accompanied by this English gentleman," said she, "and not under any compulsion?"

"On the contrary, madame, he seemed quite cheerful."

"Well, then, there is nothing to be frightened about. This letter has been written a long time; and, in spite of the three black seals, it has no bearing on anything to-day."

Philippe bowed and departed. When the husband and wife were alone:

"What does he say?" asked Monsieur de l'Estorade, and he put out his hand for the letter his wife still held.

"No. Do not read it," said the Countess, not surrendering it.

"Why not?"

"It will pain you. It is quite enough that I should have had the shock, and in the presence of the old steward, before whom I had to control myself."

"Does it speak of any purpose of suicide?"

Madame de l'Estorade did not speak, but she nodded affimatively.

"But a definite, immediate purpose?"

"The letter was written yesterday morning; and to all appearance, but for the really providential presence of this stranger, last evening, during Monsieur de Sallenauve's absence, the wretched man would have carried out his fatal purpose."

"The Englishman has, no doubt, carried him off solely to hinder it. That being the case, he will not lose sight of him."

"We may also count on Monsieur de Sallenauve's intervention," observed Madame de l'Estorade. "He has probably followed them."

"Then there is nothing so very alarming in the letter," said her husband. And again he held out his hand for it.

"But when I entreat you not to read it," said Madame de l'Estorade, holding it back. "Why do you want to agitate yourself so painfully? It is not only the idea of suicide—our unhappy friend's mind is completely unhinged."

At this instant piercing shrieks were heard, uttered by René, the youngest of the children, and this threw his mother into one of those maternal panics of which she was quite unable to control the expression.

"Good God! What has happened?" she cried, rushing out of the room.

Monsieur de l'Estorade, less easily perturbed, only went as far as the door to ask a servant what was the matter.

"It is nothing, Monsieur le Comte. Monsieur René in shutting a drawer pinched the tip of his finger."

The Peer of France did not think it necessary to proceed to the scene of the catastrophe; he knew that in these cases he must leave his wife to give free course to her extravagant motherly solicitude, or take a sharp *wigging*. As he returned to his seat by the table he felt a paper under his foot; it was the famous letter, which Madame de l'Estorade had dropped as she flew off without observing its fall.

Opportunity and a sort of fatality that frequently rules

human affairs, prompted Monsieur de l'Estorade, who could not understand his wife's objections; he hastened to gratify his curiosity.

Marie-Gaston wrote as follows:

"MADAME,—This letter will not be so amusing as those I wrote you from Arcis-sur-Aube. But you must not be frightened by the determination I have come to. I am simply going to join my wife, from whom I have been too long parted, and to-night, soon after midnight, I shall be with her, never to leave her again. You and Sallenauve have, no doubt, remarked that it is strange that I should not yet have been to visit her tomb; two of my servants were saying so the other day, not knowing that I could overhear them. But I should have been a great fool to go to a graveyard and stare at a block of stone that cannot speak to me, when every night as midnight strikes, I hear a little tap at my bedroom door, which I open at once to our dear Louise, who is not altered at all; on the contrary, I think she is fairer and lovelier. She has had great difficulty in getting my discharge from this world from Mary the Queen of the Angels; but last night she brought me my papers properly made out, sealed with a large seal of green wax, and at the same time she gave me a tiny phial of hydrocyanic acid. One drop sends me to sleep, and when I wake I am on the other side.

"Louise also gave me a message for you; to tell you that Monsieur de l'Estorade has a liver complaint and cannot live long; and that when he is dead you are to marry Sallenauve, because over there you are always restored to the husband you loved; and she thinks our party of four will be much pleasanter with you and me and Sallenauve than with your Monsieur de l'Estorade, who is enough to bore you to death, and whom you married against your will.

"My message delivered, I have only to wish you good patience, madame, during the time you have still to spend down here, and to subscribe myself your affectionate humble servant."

If, on finishing this letter, it had occurred to Monsieur de l'Estorade to look at himself in a glass, he would have seen in the sudden crestfallen expression of his features the effects of the unavowed but terrible blow he had dealt himself by his luckless curiosity. His feelings, his mind, his self-respect had all felt one and the same shock; and the quite obvious insanity revealed in the prediction of which he was the subject only made it seem more threatening. Believing, like the Mussulmans, that madmen are gifted with a sort of second sight, he gave himself over at once, felt a piercing pain in his diseased liver, and was seized with a jealous hatred of Sallenauve, his designate successor, such as must cut off any kind of friendly relations between them.

At the same time, as he saw how ridiculous, how absolutely devoid of reason, was the impression that had taken possession of him, he was terrified lest any one should suspect its existence; and with the instinctive secretiveness which always prompts the mortally sick to hide the mischief, he began to consider how he could keep from his wife the foolish act that had blighted his whole existence. It would seem incredible that lying under his very eye the fatal letter should have escaped his notice; and from this to the suspicion that he had read it the inference was only too plain.

He rose, and softly opening the door of his room, after making sure that there was nobody in the drawing-room beyond, he went on tiptoe to throw the letter on the floor at the furthest side of the room, where Madame de l'Estorade would suppose that she had dropped it. Then, like a schoolboy who had been playing a trick, and wishes to put the authorities off the scent by an affectation of studiousness, he hastily strewed his table with papers out of a bulky official case, so as to seem absorbed in accounts when his wife should return.

Meanwhile, as need scarcely be said, he listened in case anybody but Madame de l'Estorade should come into the outer room where he had laid his trap; in that case he would have intervened at once to hinder indiscreet eyes from investigating the document that held such strange secrets.

Madame de l'Estorade's voice speaking to some one, and her appearance in his room a few minutes after with Monsieur Octave de Camps, showed that the trick had succeeded. By going forward as his visitor came in, he could see through the half-open door the spot where he had left the letter. Not only was it gone, but he could detect by a movement of his wife's that she had tucked it into her morning gown in the place where Louis XIII. dared not seek the secrets of Mademoiselle de Hautefort.

"I have come to fetch you to go with me to Rastignac, as we agreed last evening," said de Camps.

"Quite right," said his friend, putting up his papers with a feverish haste that showed he was not in a normal frame of mind.

"Are you ill?" said Madame de l'Estorade, who knew her husband too well not to be struck by the singular absence of mind he betrayed; and at the same time, looking him in the face, she observed a strange change in his countenance.

"You do not look quite yourself, indeed," said Monsieur de Camps. "If you had rather, we will put off this visit."

"Not at all," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "I have worried myself over this work, and want pulling together—But what about René?" said he to his wife, whose inquisitive eye oppressed him. "What was the matter that he screamed so loud?"

"A mere trifle!" said Madame de l'Estorade, still studying his face.

"Well, then, my dear fellow," said her husband, assuming as indifferent a manner as he could command, "I have only to change my coat and I am yours."

When the Countess was alone with Monsieur de Camps.

"Does it not strike you," said she, "that Monsieur de l'Estorade seems quite upset this morning?"

"As I said just now, he is not at all himself. But the explanation is perfectly reasonable; we disturbed him in the middle of his work. Office work is unhealthy; I never in my life was so well as I have been since I took over the ironworks you so vehemently abuse."

"To be sure," said Madame de l'Estorade, with a deep sigh; "he needs exercise, an active life; there can be no doubt that he has some incipient liver disease."

"Because he looks yellow? But he has looked so ever since I have known him."

"Oh! monsieur, I cannot be mistaken. There is something seriously wrong, and you would do me the greatest service——"

"Madame, you have only to command me."

"When Monsieur de l'Estorade comes back, we will speak of the little damage René has done to his finger. Tell me that trifling accidents, if neglected, may lead to serious mischief—that gangrene has been known to supervene and make amputation necessary. That will give me an excuse for sending for Dr. Bianchon."

"Certainly," said Monsieur de Camps. "I do not think medical advice very necessary; but if it will reassure you——"

At this moment Monsieur de l'Estorade came back; he had almost recovered his usual looks, but a strong smell of Eau de Mélisse des Carmes proved that he had had recourse to that cordial to revive him. Monsieur de Camps played his part as Job's comforter to perfection; as to the Countess, she had no need to affect anxiety; her make-believe only concerned its object.

"My dear," said she to her husband, after listening to the ironmaster's medical discourse, "as you come home from the Minister's I wish you would call on Dr. Bianchon."

"What next!" said he, shrugging his shoulders, "call out such a busy man for what you yourself say is a mere trifle."

"If you will not go, I will send Lucas. Monsieur de Camps has quite upset me."

"If you choose to be ridiculous," said her husband sharply, "I know no means of preventing it; but one thing I may remind you, and that is, that if you send for a medical man when there is nothing the matter, under serious circumstances you may find that he will not come."

"And you will not go?"

"I will certainly not," said Monsieur de l'Estorade; "and if I had the honor of being master in my own house, I should forbid your sending any one in my stead."

"My dear, you are the master, and since you refuse so emphatically we will say no more about it. I will try not to be too anxious."

"Are you coming, de Camps?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "for at this rate I shall be sent off directly to order the child's funeral."

"But, my dear, are you ill," said the Countess, taking his hand, "that you can say such shocking things in cold blood? It is not like your usual patience with my little motherly fussiness—nor like the politeness on which you pride yourself—to everybody, including your wife."

"No, but the truth is," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, irritated instead of soothed by this gentle and affectionate remonstrance, "your motherly care is really becoming a monomania; you make life unbearable to everybody but your children. Deuce take it all! if they are our children, I am their father; and if I am not adored as they are, at any rate I have the right to expect that my house may not be made uninhabitable!"

While he poured out this jeremiad, striding up and down the room, the Countess was gesticulating desperately to Monsieur de Camps as if to ask him whether he did not discern a frightful symptom in this scene.

To put an end to this painful contest, of which he had so involuntarily been the cause, he now said:

"Are we going?"

"Come along," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, leading the way, without taking leave of his wife.

"Oh, I was forgetting a message for you," added the ironmaster, turning back. "Madame de Camps will call for you at about two o'clock to choose some spring dress stuffs; she has settled that we shall all four go on afterwards to the flower-show. When we leave Rastignac, l'Estorade and I will come back to fetch you, and if you are not in we will wait."

The Countess scarcely heeded this programme; a flash of light had come to her. As soon as she was alone, she took out Marie-Gaston's letter, and finding it folded in the original creases:

"Not a doubt of it!" she exclaimed. "I remember replacing it in the envelope folded inside out. The unhappy man has read it."

Some hours later Madame de l'Estorade and Madame de Camps were together in the drawing-room where only a few days since Sallenauve's cause had been so warmly argued.

"Good heavens! what is the matter with you?" cried Madame de Camps, on finding her friend in tears as she finished writing a letter.

The Countess told her of all that had passed, and read her Marie-Gaston's letter. At any other time the disaster it so plainly betrayed would have greatly grieved her friend; but the secondary misfortune which it had apparently occasioned absorbed all her thoughts.

"And are you quite sure that your husband mastered the contents of that ill-starred letter?" she asked.

"How can I doubt it?" replied Madame de l'Estorade. "The paper cannot have turned itself inside out; and besides, when I recall it all, I fancy that at the moment when I flew off to René I let something drop. As ill-luck would have it, I did not stop to look."

"But very often, when you rack your memory, you remember things that did not happen."

"But, my dear friend, the extraordinary change that so suddenly took place in Monsieur de l'Estorade could only be due to some overpowering shock. He looked like a man struck by lightning."

"Very well; but then if it is to be accounted for by a painful surprise, why do you insist on regarding it as the result of a liver complaint."

"Oh, that is no new thing to me," said Madame de l'Estorade. "Only, when sick people make no complaints one is

apt to forget.—Look here, my dear," she went on, pointing to a volume that lay open near her, "just before your arrival I was reading in this medical dictionary that persons with liver disease become gloomy, restless, and irritable. And for some little time past I have noticed a great change in my husband's temper; you yourself remarked on it the other day; and this little scene, at which Monsieur de Camps was present—precedented, I assure you, in our married life—seems to me a terrible symptom."

"My dear, good child, you are like all people when they are bent on worrying themselves. In the first place, you study medical books, which is the most foolish thing in the world. I defy you to read the description of a disease without fancying that you can identify the symptoms in yourself or in some one you care for. And besides, you are mixing up things that are quite different: the effects of a fright with those of a chronic complaint—they have nothing on earth in common."

"No, no, I am not confusing them; I know what I am talking about. Do not you know that in our poor human machinery, if any part is already affected, every strong emotion attacks that spot at once?"

"At any rate," said her friend, to put an end to the medical question, "if that unhappy madman's letter is likely to have some ulterior influence on your husband's health, it threatens far more immediately to imperil your domestic peace. That must be considered first."

"There is no alternative," said the Countess. "Monsieur de Sallenauve must never again set foot in the house."

"There is a good deal to be said on that point, and it is just what I want to talk over with you.—Do you know that yesterday I found you lacking in that moderation which has always been a prominent trait in your character——"

"When was that?" asked Madame de l'Estorade.

"At the moment when you favored Monsieur de Sallenauve with such a burst of gratitude. When I advised you not to avoid him for fear of tempting him to seek your company, I

certainly did not advise you to fling your kindness at his head, so as to turn it! As the wife of so zealous an adherent of the reigning dynasty, you ought to know better what is meant by *Le Juste Milieu*" (the happy medium).

"Oh, my dear, no witticisms at my husband's expense!"

"I am not talking of your husband, but of you, my dear. You amazed me so much last night, that I felt inclined to recall all I had said on my first impulse. I like my advice to be followed—but not too much followed."

"At any other moment I would ask you to tell me wherein I so far exceeded your instructions; but now that fate has settled the question, and Monsieur de Sallenauve must be simply cleared out of the way, of what use is it to discuss the exact limit-line of my behavior to him?"

"Well," said Madame de Camps, "to tell you the whole truth, I was beginning to think the man a danger to you on quite another side."

"Which is?——"

"Through Naïs. That child, with her passion for her preserver, really makes me very anxious."

"Oh," said the Countess, with a melancholy smile, "is not that ascribing too much importance to a child's nonsense?"

"Naïs is a child, no doubt, but who will be a woman sooner than most children. Did you not yourself write to me that she had intuitions on some subjects quite beyond her years?"

"That is true. But in what you call her passion for Monsieur de Sallenauve, besides its being quite natural, the dear child is so frank and effusive that the feeling has a genuinely childlike stamp."

"Well—trust me, and do not trust to that; not even when this troublesome person is out of the way! Think, if when the time came to arrange for her marriage this liking had grown up with her—a pretty state of things!"

"Oh, between this and then—thank Heaven!——" said the Countess incredulously.

"Between this and then," replied Madame de Camps, "Monsieur de Sallenauve may have achieved such success that his

name is in everybody's mouth; and with her lively imagination, Naïs would be the first to be captivated by such brilliancy."

"But still, my dear, the difference of age——"

"Monsieur de Sallenauve is thirty; Naïs is nearly thirteen. The difference is exactly the same as between your age and Monsieur de l'Estorade's, and you married him."

"Quite true; you may be right," said Madame de l'Estorade; "what I did as a matter of good sense, Naïs might insist on passionately. But be easy; I will so effectually shatter her idol——"

"That again, like the hatred you propose to act for your husband's benefit, requires moderation. If you do not manage it gradually, you may fail of your end. You must allow it to be supposed that circumstances have brought about a feeling which should seem quite spontaneous."

"But do you suppose," cried Madame de l'Estorade excitedly, "that I need act aversion for this man? Why, I hate him! He is our evil genius!"

"Come, come, my dear, compose yourself! I really do not know you. You who used to be unruffled reason!"

Lucas at this moment came in to ask the Countess if she could see a Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau.

Madame de l'Estorade looked at her friend, saying:

"The organist who was so helpful to Monsieur de Sallenauve at the time of his election. I do not know what he can want of me."

"Never mind; see him," said her friend. "Before opening hostilities, it is not amiss to know what is going on in the enemy's camp."

"Show him in," said the Countess.

Jacques Bricheteau came in. So sure had he been, on the other hand, of being among friends, that he had given no special attention to his toilet. A capacious chocolate-brown overcoat, whose cut it would have been vain to assign to any date of fashion; a checked waistcoat, gray and green, buttoned to the throat; a black cravat, twisted to a rope, and

worn without a collar, while it showed an inch of very doubtful clean shirt front; yellow drab trousers, gray stockings, and tied shoes—this was the more than careless array in which the organist ventured into the presence of the elegant Countess.

Scarcely bidden to take a seat:

"Madame," said he, "I have perhaps taken a liberty in presenting myself to you, unknown; but Monsieur Marie-Gaston spoke to me of your possibly wishing that I should give some lessons to mademoiselle your daughter. I told him at first that there might be some little difficulty, as all my time was filled up; but the Préfet of Police has just set me at leisure by dismissing me from a post I held in his department, so I am happy to be able to place myself entirely at your service."

"And has your dismissal, monsieur, been occasioned by the part you played in Monsieur de Sallenauve's election?" asked Madame de Camps.

"As no reason was assigned, it seems probable; all the more so that, in the course of twenty years' service, this discharge is the very first hitch that has ever arisen between me and my superiors."

"It cannot be denied," said Madame de l'Estorade, sharply enough, "that you very seriously interfered with the intentions of the Government."

"Yes, madame; and I accepted my dismissal as a disaster I was quite prepared for. After all, what was the loss of my small appointment in comparison with the election of Monsieur de Sallenauve?"

"I am really distressed," the Countess went on, "to make no better return for the eagerness you are good enough to express; but I may as well tell you that I have no fixed purpose as to choosing a master for my daughter, and in spite of the immense talent for which the world gives you credit, I should be afraid of such serious teaching for a little girl of thirteen."

"Quite the reverse, madame," replied the organist. "Nobody credits me with talent. Monsieur de Sallenauve and

Monsieur Marie-Gaston have heard me two or three times, but apart from that, I am a mere unknown teacher, and perhaps you are right—perhaps a very tiresome one. So, setting aside the question of lessons to mademoiselle your daughter, let me speak of the thing that has really brought me here—Monsieur de Sallenauve."

"Did Monsieur de Sallenauve charge you with any message to my husband?" said Madame de l'Estorade, with marked coldness.

"No, madame, he has, I grieve to say, charged me with nothing. I went to call on him this morning, but he was absent. I went to Ville-d'Avray, where I was told that I should find him, and learned that he had started on a journey with Monsieur Marie-Gaston. Then, thinking that you might possibly know the object of this journey, and how long he would be away——"

"Nothing of the kind," said Madame de l'Estorade, interrupting him in a hard tone.

"I had a letter this morning," Jacques Bircheteau went on, "from Arcis-sur-Aube. My aunt, Mother Marie des Anges, warns me, through Monsieur de Sallenauve's notary, that a base conspiracy is being organized, and our friend's absence complicates matters very seriously. I cannot understand what put it into his head to vanish without warning anybody who takes an interest——"

"That he should not have given you notice," said Madame de l'Estorade, in the same tone, "may possibly surprise you. But so far as my husband and I are concerned, there is nothing to be astonished at."

The significance of this uncivil distinction was too clear to be misunderstood. Jacques Bircheteau looked at the Countess, and her eyes fell; but the whole expression of her face, set due North, confirmed the meaning which it was impossible to avoid finding in her words.

"I beg your pardon, madame," said he, rising. "I did not know—I could not have supposed that you were so utterly indifferent to Monsieur de Sallenauve's prospects and honor.

But a minute ago, in the ante-room, when your servant was in doubt about announcing me, mademoiselle your daughter, on hearing that I was a friend of his, eagerly took my part; and I was so foolish as to conclude that she represented the general good feeling of the family."

After pointing this distinction, which was quite a match for Madame de l'Estorade's, thus paying her back in her own coin, Jacques Bricheteau bowed ceremoniously, and was about to leave.

The two ladies exchanged a glance, as if to ask each other whether it would be well to let this man depart thus after shooting so keen a parting dart.

In fact, a crushing contradiction was at this instant given to the Countess' assumption of indifference: Naïs came flying in.

"Mamma!" she cried exultantly, "a letter from Monsieur de Sallenauve!"

The Countess blushed purple.

"What manners are these, bouncing in like a mad thing?" said she severely. "And how do you know that the letter is from that gentlemen?"

"Oh!" said Naïs, turning the blade in the wound, "when he wrote to you from Arcis, I got to know his writing."

"You are a silly, inquisitive child," said her mother, roused out of her usual indulgence by so many luckless speeches. "Go to nurse."

Then to give herself some countenance:

"Allow me, monsieur," said she to Jacques Bricheteau, as she opened the letter so inappropriately delivered.

"Nay, Madame la Comtesse," replied the organist, "it is I who crave your permission to wait till you have read your letter. If by any chance Monsieur de Sallenauve should give you any account of his movements, you would perhaps have the kindness to give me the benefit of it——"

Having looked through the letter:

"Monsieur de Sallenauve," said the Countess, "desires me to tell my husband that he is on his way to England—Han-

well, in the county of Middlesex. He is to be addressed under cover to Doctor Ellis."

Jacques Bricheteau again bowed with due formality, and left the room.

"Naïs has just treated you to a taste of her girl-in-love tricks," said Madame de Camps. "But you had well earned it. You had behaved to that poor man with a hardness that deserved a severer sally than his parting retort. He seems to have a ready wit of his own; and '*If by any chance*' Monsieur de Sallenauve had given you any information, was rather neat under the circumstances."

"What is to be done?" said her friend; "the day began badly; all the rest is to match."

"What about the letter?"

"It is heartbreaking.—Read it."

"MADAME" (Sallenauve wrote),—"I succeeded in overtaking Lord Lewin a few leagues beyond Paris—he is the Englishman of whom I spoke to you, and Providence sent him to spare us a terrible catastrophe. Possessed of a large fortune, he, like many of his countrymen, is liable to attacks of depression, and only his strength of mind has saved him from the worst results of the malady. His indifference to life, and the cool stoicism with which he speaks of voluntary death, won him at Florence, where they met, our unhappy friend's confidence. Lord Lewin, who is interested in the study of vehement emotions, is intimately acquainted with Dr. Ellis, a physician famous for his treatment of the insane, and his Lordship has often spent some weeks at the Hanwell Asylum for Lunatics in Middlesex. It is one of the best managed asylums in England, and Dr. Ellis is at the head of it.

"Lord Lewin, on arriving at Ville-d'Avray, at once discerned in Marie-Gaston the early symptoms of acute mania. Though not yet obvious to superficial observers, they did not escape Lord Lewin's practised eye. 'He picked and hoarded,' said he, in speaking of our poor friend; that is to say, as they

walked about the park Marie-Gaston would pick up such rubbish as straws, old bits of paper, and even rusty nails, putting them carefully in his pocket; and this, it would seem, is a symptom familiar to those who have studied the progress of mental disease. Then, by recurring to the discussions they had held at Florence, Lord Lewin had no difficulty in discovering his secret purpose of killing himself. Believing that his wife visited him every evening, the poor fellow had determined—on the very night of your little dance—to follow his adored Louise, as he said. So, you see, my fears were not exaggerated, but were the outcome of an instinct.

"Lord Lewin, instead of opposing his resolution, affected to participate in it.

" 'But men like us,' said he, 'ought not to die in any vulgar way, and there is a mode of death of which I had thought for myself, and which I propose that we should seek in common.—In South America, not far from Paraguay, there is one of the most tremendous cataracts in the world, known as the Falls of Gayra. The spray that rises from the abyss is to be seen for many leagues, and reflects seven rainbows. A vast volume of water, spreading over a breadth of more than twelve thousand feet, is suddenly pent up in a narrow channel, and falls into a gulf below with a sound more deafening than a hundred thunderclaps at once.—That is where I have always dreamed of dying.'

" 'Let us be off,' said Marie-Gaston.

" 'This very minute,' said Lord Lewin. 'Pack your things; we will sail from England, and be there in a few weeks.'

"And in this way, madame, the clever foreigner succeeded in putting our friend off from his dreadful purpose. As you may understand, he is taking him to England to place him in Dr Ellis' care, since he—Lord Lewin says—has not his match in Europe for treating the very sad case that is to be confided to him. If I had been present, I should have concurred entirely in this arrangement, which has this advantage, that in the event of his recovery our friend's attack will remain unknown.

"Informed by a letter left for me by Lord Lewin at Ville-d'Avray, I immediately set out in pursuit; and at Beauvais, whence I am writing, I came up with them in a hotel, where Lord Lewin had put up to enable the patient to benefit by sleep, which had happily come over him in the carriage, after weeks of almost total insomnia. Lord Lewin looks upon this as a very favorable symptom, and he says that the malady thus treated, as it will be, from the beginning, has the best possible chance of cure.

"I shall follow them closely to Hanwell, taking care not to be seen by Marie-Gaston, since, in Lord Lewin's opinion, my presence might disturb the comparative tranquillity of mind that he has derived from the thought of the pompous end he is going to find. On reaching the asylum, I shall wait to hear Dr. Ellis' verdict.

"The session opens so soon that I fear I may not be back in time for the first sittings; but I shall write to the President of the Chamber, and if it should happen that any difficulty arose as to the leave of absence for which I must petition, I venture to rely on Monsieur de l'Estorade's kindness to certify the absolute necessity for it. At the same time, I must beg him to remember that I cannot authorize him on any consideration to reveal the nature of the business which has compelled me to go abroad. However, the mere statement of a fact by such a man as M. de l'Estorade must be enough to secure its acceptance without any explanation.

"Allow me, madame, to remain, etc."

As Madame de Camps finished reading, carriage wheels were heard.

"There are our gentlemen back again," said the Countess. "Now, shall I show this letter to my husband?"

"You cannot do otherwise. There would be too great a risk of what Naïs might say. Besides, Monsieur de Sallenauve writes most respectfully; there is nothing to encourage your husband's notions."

As soon as Monsieur de l'Estorade came in, his wife could

see that he had recovered his usual looks, and she was about to congratulate him, when he spoke first.

"Who is the man of very shabby appearance," asked Monsieur de l'Estorade, "whom I found speaking to Naïs on the stairs?"

As his wife did not seem to know what he was talking about, he went on. "A man very much marked by the small-pox, with a greasy hat and a brown overcoat?"

"Oh!" said Madame de Camps to her friend, "our visitor! Naïs could not resist the opportunity of talking about her idol."

"But who is the man?"

"Is not his name Jacques Bricheteau?" said the Countess, "a friend of Monsieur de Sallenauve's."

Seeing a cloud fall on her husband's countenance, Madame de l'Estorade hurriedly explained the two objects of the organist's visit, and she gave the Member's letter to Monsieur de l'Estorade.

While he was reading it:

"He seems better, do you think?" the Countess asked Monsieur de Camps.

"Oh, he is perfectly right again," said the ironmaster. "There is not a sign of what we saw this morning. He had worried himself over his work; exercise has done him good; and yet it is to be observed that he had an unpleasant shock just now at the Minister's."

"Why, what happened?" asked Madame de l'Estorade.

"Your friend Monsieur de Sallenauve's business seems to be in a bad way."

"Thank you for nothing!" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, returning the letter to his wife. "I shall certainly not do anything he asks me."

"Then have you heard anything against him?" said she, trying to appear perfectly indifferent as she asked the question.

"Yes; Rastignac told me that he had letters from Arcis; some very awkward discoveries have been made there."

"Well, what did I tell you?" cried Madame de l'Estorade.

"What did you tell me?"

"To be sure. Did I not give you a hint some time ago that Monsieur de Sallenauve was a man to be let drop? Those were the very words I used, as I happen to remember."

"But was it I who brought him here?"

"You can hardly say that it was I.—Only just now, before knowing anything of the distressing facts you have just learned, I was speaking to Madame de Camps of another reason which should make us anxious to put an end to the acquaintance."

"Very true," said Madame de Camps. "Your wife, but a minute ago, was talking of the sort of frenzy that possesses Naïs with regard to her preserver, and she foresaw great difficulties in the future."

"It is an unsatisfactory connection in every way," said Monsieur de l'Estorade.

"It seems to me," said Monsieur de Camps, who was not behind the scenes, "that you are rather in a hurry. Some compromising discoveries are said to have been made with reference to Monsieur de Sallenauve, but what is the value of these discoveries? Wait before you hang him, at least till he has been tried."

"My husband can do what he thinks proper," said the Countess. "For my part, I do not hesitate to throw him over at once. My friends, like Cæsar's wife, must be above suspicion."

"The awkward thing," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "is that we are under such an annoying obligation to him——"

"But, really," exclaimed Madame de l'Estorade, "if a convict had saved my life, should I be obliged to receive him in my drawing-room?"

"Indeed, my dear, you are going too far," said Madame de Camps.

"Well, well," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, "there is no occasion to raise a scandal; things must be allowed to take

their course. The dear man is abroad now; who knows if he will ever come back?"

"What, he has fled at a mere rumor?" said Monsieur de Camps.

"Not precisely on that account," replied the Count. "He had a pretext—but once out of France——"

"As to that conclusion," said Madame de l'Estorade, "I do not for a moment believe in it. His pretext is a good reason, and as soon as he hears from his friend the organist he will hurry back. So, my dear, you must take your courage in both hands and cut the intimacy short at a blow if you do not intend it to continue."

"And that is really your meaning?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, looking keenly at his wife.

"I?—I would write to him without any sort of ceremony, and tell him that he will oblige us by calling here no more. At the same time, as it is a little difficult to write such a letter, we will concoct it together if you like."

"We will see," said her husband, beaming at the suggestion; "the house is not falling yet. The most pressing matter at the moment is the flower-show we are to go to together. It closes, I think, at four o'clock, and we have but an hour before us."

Madame de l'Estorade, who had dressed before Madame de Camps' arrival, rang for the maid to bring her bonnet and shawl.

As she was putting them on in front of a glass:

"Then you really love me, Renée?" said her husband in her ear.

"Can you be so silly as to ask?" replied she, giving him her most affectionate look.

"Well, I have a confession to make to you—I read the letter Philippe brought."

"Then I am no longer surprised at the change that came over you. I too must tell you something. When I proposed that we should concoct Monsieur de Sallenauve's dismissal between us, I had already written it—directly after you went

out; and you can take it out of my blotting-book and post it if you think it will do."

Quite beside himself with joy at finding that his hypothetical successor had been so immediately sacrificed, Monsieur de l'Estorade threw his arms round his wife and kissed her effusively.

"Well done!" cried Monsieur de Camps. "This is better than this morning!"

"This morning I was a fool," said the Count, as he turned over the blotting-book to find the letter, which he might have taken his wife's word for.

"Say no more," said Madame de Camps in an undertone to her husband. "I will explain all this pother to you presently."

Younger again by ten years, the Count offered his arm to Madame de Camps, while his wife took the ironmaster's.

"And Naïs?" said Monsieur de l'Estorade, seeing the little girl looking forlorn as they went. "Is not she coming too?"

"No," said her mother; "I am not pleased with her."

"Pooh!" said the father, "I proclaim an amnesty.—Run and put your bonnet on," he added to the child.

Naïs looked at her mother for the ratification which she thought necessary under the hierarchy of power as it existed in the l'Estorade household.

"Go," said the Countess, "since your father wishes it."

While they waited for the little girl:

"To whom are you writing, Lucas?" asked the Count of the man-servant, who had begun a letter on the table by which he stood.

"To my son," said Lucas, "who is very anxious to get his sergeant's stripes. I am telling him that you promised me a note to his colonel, Monsieur le Comte."

"Perfectly true, on my honor; and I had quite forgotten it. Remind me to-morrow morning; I will write it the first thing when I get up."

"You are very good, sir——"

"Here," said Monsieur de l'Estorade, putting his fingers

in his waistcoat pocket and taking out three gold pieces, "send these to the corporal from me, and tell him to get his men to drink to his stripes."

Lucas was amazed; he had never known his master so genial and liberal.

When Naïs was ready, Madame de l'Estorade, proud of having had the courage to leave her in disgrace for half an hour, hugged her as if she had not seen her for two years; then they all set out for the Luxembourg, where the Horticultural Society at that time held its shows.

Towards the end of the interview which Monsieur Octave de Camps, under the auspices of Monsieur de l'Estorade, had at last been able to get with Rastignac, the Minister's usher had come in to give him the cards of Monsieur le Procureur-Général Vinet and Monsieur Maxime de Trailles.

"Very well," said the Minister. "Tell the gentlemen I will see them in a few minutes."

Soon after, the ironmaster and Monsieur de l'Estorade rose to leave; and it was then that Rastignac had briefly told the Count of the danger looming on the parliamentary horizon of his friend Sallenauve. At the word "friend," Monsieur de l'Estorade had protested.

"I do not know, my dear Minister," said he, "why you persist in giving that name to a man who is really no more than an acquaintance, I might say a provisional acquaintance, if the reports you have mentioned should prove to have any foundation."

"I am delighted to hear you say so," replied Rastignac. "For in the thick of the hostilities which seem likely to arise between that gentleman and our side, I confess that the warm feeling I imagined you to have towards him would somewhat have fettered me."

"I am grateful for your consideration," replied the Count; "but pray understand that I give you a free hand. It is a matter entirely at your discretion to treat Monsieur de Sallenauve as a political foe, without any fear that the blows you deal him will at all hurt me."

Thereupon they left, and Messieurs Vinet and de Trailles had been shown in.

Vinet, the Attorney-General, and father of Olivier Vinet, whom the reader already knows, was one of the warmest champions and most welcome advisers of the existing Government. Designate as the Minister of Justice at the next shuffling of the Cabinet, he was behind the scenes of every ambiguous situation; and in every secret job nothing was concocted without his co-operation, in the plot at least, if not in the doing.

The electoral affairs of Arcis had a twofold claim on his interference: First, because his son held a position among the legal magnates of the town; secondly, because as connected through his wife with the Chargebœufs of la Brie, the Cinq-Cygnes of Champagne being a younger branch of that family, this aristocratic alliance made him think it a point of honor to assert his importance in both districts, and never to miss a chance of interfering in their affairs.

So, that morning, when Monsieur de Trailles had called on the Minister armed with a letter from Madame Beauvisage, full of compromising scandal concerning the new Member for Arcis:

"Find Vinet, as coming from me," said Rastignac, without listening to any explanations, "and try to bring him here as soon as possible."

At Maxime's bidding—who offered to fetch him in his carriage—Vinet was quite ready to go to Rastignac; and now that he has made his way to the Minister's private room, we shall be better informed as to the danger hanging over Sallenauve's head, of which Jacques Bricheteau and Monsieur de l'Estorade have given us but a slight idea.

"Then you mean, my dear friends," said the Minister as soon as they had settled to their talk, "that we may get some hold on this political purist!—I met him yesterday at l'Estorade's, and he struck me as most undauntedly hostile."

Maxime, whose presence was in no sense official, knew better than to answer this remark. Vinet, on the contrary, almost

insolently conscious of his political importance, Public Prosecutor as he was, had too much of the advocate in his composition to miss a chance of speaking.

"When, only this morning, monsieur"—and he bowed to Maxime—"did me the honor to communicate to me a letter he had received from Madame Beauvisage, I had just had one from my son, in which he gave me, with slight variations, the same information. I agree with him that the matter looks ugly for our adversary—but it will need nice management."

"I really hardly know what the matter is," said the Minister. "As I particularly wished for your opinion on the case, my dear Vinet, I begged Monsieur de Trailles to postpone the details till we were all three together.

This was authorizing Maxime to proceed with the narrative, but Vinet again seized the opportunity for hearing his own voice.

"This," said he, "is what my son Olivier writes to me, confirming Madame Beauvisage's letter—she, I may say incidentally, would have made a famous Member of Parliament, my dear sir.—On a market day not long since, Pigoult the notary, who has the management of all the new Member's business matters, received a visit, it would seem, from a peasant woman from Romilly, a large village not far from Arcis. To hear the Marquis de Sallenauve, who has so suddenly reappeared, you would think that he was the only existing scion of the Sallenauve family; but this did not prevent this woman from displaying some papers in due form, proving that she too is a living Sallenauve, in the direct line, and related nearly enough to claim her part in any heritable property."

"Well," said Rastignac, "but did she know no more of the Marquis' existence than he knew of hers?"

"That did not plainly appear from her statements," said Vinet; "but that very confusion seems to me most convincing, for, as you know, between relations in such different positions great difficulties are apt to arise."

"Kindly proceed with the story," said the Minister. "Before drawing conclusions, we must hear the facts—though, as you know by experience, that is not the invariable practice in Parliament."

"Not always to the dissatisfaction of the Ministers," said Maxime, laughing.

"Monsieur is right," said Vinet; "all hail to a successful muddler!—But to return to our peasant woman, who, in consequence of the ruin of the Sallenauve family, has fallen into great poverty and a station far beneath her birth; she first appeared as a petitioner for money, and it seems probable that prompt and liberal generosity would have kept her quiet. But it is also likely that she was but ill pleased by Maître Achille Pigoult's reception of her demands; for on leaving his office she went to the market square, and seconded by a neighbor, a lawyer from the village, who had come with her, she disburdened herself of various statements relating to my highly-esteemed fellow-member which were not very flattering to his character; declaring that the Marquis de Sallenauve was not his father; and again, that there was no Marquis de Sallenauve in existence. And at any rate, she concluded, this newly-made Sallenauve was a heartless wretch who would have nothing to say to his relations. But, she added, she could make him disgorge, and, with the help of the clever man who had come with her to support her by his advice, Monsieur le Député might be sure that they 'would make him jump to another tune.' "

"I have not the slightest objection," said Rastignac. "But the woman has, I suppose, some proof in support of her statements?"

"That is the weak point of the matter," replied Vinet. "But let me go on.—At Arcis, my dear sir, the Government has a remarkably devoted and intelligent servant in the head of the police. Moving about among the people, which is his practice on market-days, he picked up some of the woman's vicious remarks, and going off at once to the Mayor's house, he asked to see, not the Mayor himself, but Madame Beauvisage, to whom he told what was going on."

"Then is the candidate whom you had chosen for a crowning treat a perfect idiot?" Rastignac asked Maxime.

"The very man you wanted," replied Monsieur de Trailles, "imbecile to a degree! There is nothing I would not do to reverse this vexatious defeat."

"Madame Beauvisage," Vinet went on, "at once thought she would like to talk to this woman of the ready tongue; and to get hold of her, it was not a bad idea to desire Groslier, the police sergeant, to go and fetch her with a sternly threatening air, as if the authorities disapproved of her levity in using such language with regard to a member of the National Chamber, and to bring her forthwith to the Mayor's house."

"And it was Madame Beauvisage, you say, who suggested this method of procedure?" said Rastignac.

"Oh yes, she is a very capable woman," said Maxime.

"Driven hard," continued the speaker, "by Madame the Mayoress, who took care to secure her husband's presence at the cross-examination, the woman proved to be anything rather than coherent. How she had ascertained that the Member could not be the Marquis' son; and her confident assertion, on the other hand, that the Marquis did not even exist, were not by any means conclusively proved. Hearsay, vague reports, inferences drawn by her village attorney were the best of the evidence she could bring."

"Well, then," said Rastignac, "what is the upshot of it all?"

"*Nil* from the legal point of view," replied Vinet. "For even if the woman could prove that it is a mere whim on the part of the Marquis de Sallenauve to recognize the man Dorlange as his son, she would have no ground for an action in disproof. According to section 339 of the Civil Code, a positive and congenital right alone can give grounds for disputing the recognition of a natural child; in other words, there must be a direct claim on the property in which the child whose birth is disputed is enabled to claim a share."

"Your balloon collapsed!" observed the Minister.

"Whereas, on the other hand, if the good woman chooses

to dispute the existence of the Marquis de Sallenauve, she would disinherit herself, since she certainly has no claim on the estate of a man who would then be no relation of hers; besides, it is the duty of the crown, and not her part at all, to prosecute for the assumption of a false identity; the utmost she could do would be to bring the charge."

"Whence you conclude?" said Rastignac, with the sharp brevity which warns a too diffuse talker to abridge his story.

"Whence I conclude, legally speaking, that this Romilly peasant, by taking up either charge as the basis for an action, would find it a bad speculation, since in one case she must obviously lose, and in the other—which, in fact, she cannot even bring—she would get nothing out of it. But, politically speaking, it is quite another story."

"Let us see the political side then," said Rastignac; "for, so far, I can make nothing of it."

"In the first place," replied the lawyer, "you will agree with me that it is always possible to fight a bad case?"

"Certainly."

"And, then, I do not suppose that you would care whether this woman fights an action which would only end in her having to pay a lawyer's bill."

"No; I confess it is a matter to me of perfect indifference."

"And if you had cared, I should, all the same, have advised you to let matters take their course; for the Beauvisages have undertaken all the costs, including a visit to Paris for this woman and her legal adviser."

"Well, well—the action brought, what comes of it?" said Rastignac, anxious to end.

"What comes of it?" cried the lawyer, warming to the subject. "Why, everything you can manage to make of it, if, before it is argued, you can work up comments in the papers and insinuations from your friends.—What comes of it? Why, the utmost discredit for our antagonist, if he is suspected of having assumed a name he has no right to.—

What comes of it? Why, an opportunity for a fulminating speech in the Chamber——"

"Which you, no doubt, will undertake?" asked Rastignac.

"Oh, I do not know. The case must be thoroughly studied; I must see what turn it is likely to take."

"Then for the moment," the Minister observed, "it is all reduced to an application, hit or miss, of Basile's famous theory of calumny—that it is always well to keep it stirred, and that something will stick."

"Calumny? Calumny?" replied Vinet. "That we shall see; it may be no more than honest evil-speaking. Monsieur de Trailles, here, knows what went on much better than we do. He will tell you that all through the district the father's disappearance as soon as he had legally acknowledged his son had the very worst effect; that everybody retained a vague impression of mysterious complications to favor the election of this man we are talking about.

"You have no idea, my dear fellow, what can be got out of a lawsuit cleverly kept simmering, and in my long and busy career as a pleader I have seen miracles worked by such means. A parliamentary struggle is quite another matter. There proof is not needed; you may kill your man with nothing but hypotheses and asseverations if you stick to them defiantly enough."

"Well, to sum up," said Rastignac, speaking as a man of method, "how do you recommend that the affair should be managed?"

"In the first place," replied the lawyer, "I should allow the Beauvisages—since they have a fancy for it—to pay all the expenses of moving the peasant woman and her friend, and subsequently the costs of the action."

"Do I make any objection?" said the Minister. "Have I either the right or the means?"

"The case," Vinet went on, "must be put into the hands of a wily and clever lawyer: Desroches, for instance, Monsieur de Trailles' lawyer. He will know how to fill out the body of a case which, as you justly observe, is very thin."

"I certainly should not say to Monsieur de Trailles, 'I forbid you to allow anybody you please to secure the services of your solicitor,' " said Rastignac.

"Then we want an advocate who can talk with an air of 'The Family' as a sacred and precious thing; who will wax indignant at the surreptitious intrigues by which a man may scheme to insinuate himself within its holy pale."

"Desroches can find your man; and again, the Government is not likely to hinder a pleader from talking, or from being transported with indignation!"

"But, Monsieur le Ministre," Maxime put in, startled out of his attitude of passive attention by Rastignac's indifference, "is non-interference all the support to be hoped for from the Government in this struggle?"

"I hope you did not think that we should take up the action on our own account?"

"No, of course not; but we had a right to imagine that you would take some interest in it."

"How—in what way?"

"How can I tell? As Monsieur Vinet was saying just now, by tuck of drum in the subsidized newspapers—by getting your supporters to spread the gossip—by using the influence which men in power always have over the Bench."

"Thank you for nothing," said the Minister. "When you want to secure the Government as an accomplice, my dear Maxime, you must have a rather more solidly constructed scheme to show. Your air of business this morning made me think you really had a strong hand, and I have troubled our excellent friend the Public Prosecutor, who knows how high a value I set on his learning and advice; but really your plot strikes me as too transparent, and the meshes so thin that I can see through them an inevitable defeat. If I were a bachelor and wanted to marry Mademoiselle Beauvisage, I daresay I might be bolder, so I leave it to you to carry on the action in any way you please. I will not say that Government will not watch your progress with its best wishes; but it certainly will not tread the path with you."

"Well, well," said Vinet, hindering Maxime's reply, which would, no doubt, have been a bitter one, "but supposing we take the matter into court; supposing that the peasant woman, prompted by the Beauvisages, should denounce the man who was identified before the notary as being a spurious Sallenauve; then the Member is guilty of conspiracy, and for that we have him before the superior court."

"But, again, where are your proofs?" asked Rastignac. "Have you a shadow of evidence?"

"You admitted just now," observed Maxime, "that a bad case may be fought out."

"A civil action, yes; a criminal charge is quite another matter. And this would break down, for it means disputing the validity of an act drawn up by a public official, and without a particle of proof. A pretty piece of work! The case would be simply dismissed before it came to be argued in court. If we wanted to perch our enemy on a pedestal as high as the column of July, we could not go about it more effectually."

"So that in your opinion there is nothing to be done?" asked Maxime.

"By us—nothing.—But you, my dear Maxime, who have no official position, and can at a pinch use your pistol in support of the attack on Monsieur de Sallenauve's character—there is nothing to hinder you from trying your luck in the contest."

"Yes," said Maxime petulantly, "I am a sort of '*condottiere!*'"

"Not at all; you are a man with an instinctive conviction of certain facts that cannot be legally proved, and you would not be afraid to stand at the judgment seat of God."

Monsieur de Trailles rose, considerably annoyed. Vinet also rose, and giving Rastignac his hand as he took leave:

"I cannot deny," said he, "that your conduct is dictated by great prudence; and I will not say but that in your place I should do the same."

"No ill-feeling, at any rate, Maxime," said the Minister, and Maxime bowed with icy dignity.

When the two conspirators were in the outer room alone:

"Do you understand what this prudery means?" asked Maxime.

"Perfectly," said Vinet, "and for a clever man you seem to me easily taken in."

"No doubt—making you lose your time, besides losing my own to have the pleasure of hearing a man lay himself out for the reward of virtue——"

"It is not that. I think you very guileless to believe in the refusal of support that had vexed you so much."

"What? You think——"

"I think that the business is a toss-up. If the plan succeeds, the Government, sitting with its arm folded, will get all the benefit; if, on the contrary, success is not for us, it would, as soon as not, keep out of the risk of defeat. But, take my word for it, I know Rastignac; looking quite impassive, and without compromising himself at all, he will perhaps serve us better than by outspoken connivance.—Just reflect: Did he say a single word against the moral side of the attack? Did he not repeat again and again—'I make no objection. I have no right to hinder you.' And what fault had he to find with the snake's venom? That its action was not deadly enough! The fact is, my dear sir, that there will be a sharp tug of war, and it will take all Desroches' skill to put a good face on the business."

"Then you think I had better see him?"

"Do I think so?—Why, this moment, when we part."

"Do not you think it would be well that he should go and talk matters over with you?"

"No, no, no!" said Vinet. "I may be the man to do the talking in the Chamber. Desroches might be seen at my house, and I must seem immaculate."

Thereupon he bowed to Maxime, and left him in some haste, excusing himself by having to go to the Chamber and hear what was going on.

"And if I," said Maxime, running after him as he left, "if I should need your advice?"

"I am leaving Paris this evening to look after my court in the country before the session opens."

"And the question in the Chamber that you may be called upon to ask?"

"Oh, if it is not I, it will be some one else. I shall return as soon as possible; but you will understand that I must set my shop in order before I come away for at least five or six months."

"Then *Bon voyage,* monsieur," said Maxime sarcastically, and parting from him at last.

Monsieur de Trailles, left to himself, stood a little disconcerted as he fancied that here were two political Bertrands, each intending that he should snatch the chestnuts from the fire.

Rastignac's behavior especially nettled him when he looked back on their first meeting, just twenty years ago, at Madame de Restaud's. He, then already a formed man holding the sceptre of fashion, and Rastignac a poor student, not knowing how to enter or leave a room, and dismissed from the door of that handsome house when he called after his first visit, in the course of which he had contrived to commit two or three incongruous blunders!—And now Rastignac was a Peer of France and in office; while he, Maxime, no more than his tool, was obliged to listen with grounded arms when he was told that his man-traps were too artless, and that if he fancied them, he must work them alone.

But this prostration was but a lightning flash.

"Well, then!" he said to himself. "Yes, I will try the game single-handed. My instinct assures me that there is something in it.

"What next! A Dorlange, a nobody, is to keep me in check, Comte Maxime de Trailles, and make my defeat a stepping-stone? There are too many dark places in that rogue's past life for it not to be possible sooner or later to open one to the light of day——"

"To the lawyer's," said he to the coachman as he opened his carriage door.

And when he was comfortably seated on the cushions:

"After all, if I cannot succeed in overthrowing this upstart, I will put myself in the way of his insulting me; I shall have the choice of weapons, and will fire first. I will do better than the Duc de Rhétoré, my insolent friend! I will kill you, never fear!"

It may be observed that Monsieur Maxime de Trailles had been quite upset by the mere idea of being taken for a *condottiere.*

Desroches was at home, and Monsieur de Trailles was at once shown in to his private room.

Desroches was an attorney who, like Raphael, had had many manners. Having in the first instance taken over an office without a connection, he had left no stone unturned, taking every case that offered, and had found himself in very poor esteem in court. But he was hard-working, well up in all the tricks and windings of legal technicalities, an acute observer and keen reader of every impulse of the human heart; thus he had finally made a very good connection, had married a woman with a fine fortune, and had given up all pettifogging double-dealing as soon as he could make his way without it.

By 1839 Desroches was an honest attorney in good practice; that is to say, he conducted his clients' business with zeal and skill; he never would countenance any underhand proceedings, much less would he have lent them a hand. As to the fine bloom of delicate honesty which existed in Derville and some other men of that stamp, besides the impossibility of preserving it from rubbing off in the world of business—in which, as Monsieur de Talleyrand said, "Business means other people's money"—it can never be the second development of any life. The loss of that down of the soul, like that of anything virginal, is irreparable; so Desroches had made no attempt to restore it. He would have nothing to say to what was ignoble or dishonest; but the above-board tricks allowed by the Code of Procedure, the recognized sur-

prises and villainies to steal a march on an adversary, he was ready to allow.

Then, Desroches was an amusing fellow; he liked good living; and, like all men who are incessantly absorbed by the imperious demands of hard thinking, he felt a craving for highly-spiced enjoyments snatched in haste, and strong to the palate. So, while he had by degrees cleansed his ways as a lawyer, he was still the favorite attorney of men of letters, artists, and actresses, of popular courtesans and dandy bohemians such as Maxime; because he was content to live their life, all these people attracted him, and all relished his society. Their slang and wit, their rather lax moral views, their somewhat *picaresque* adventures, their expedients, their brave and honorable toil—in short, all their greatness and all their misery were perfectly understood by him, and like an ever-indulgent providence, he gave them advice and help whenever they asked for them.

But to the end that his serious and paying clients should not discover what might be somewhat compromising in his intimacy with these clients of his heart, he had days when he was the husband and father—more especially Sundays. Rarely did he fail to be seen in his quiet little carriage, in the Bois de Boulogne, his wife by his side—the largeness of her fortune stamped in her ugliness. On the opposite seat were the three children in a group, all unfortunately like their mother. This family picture, these virtuous Sunday habits, were so unlike the week-day Desroches, dining in any pot-house with all the fastest men and women of the day, that Malaga, a circus-rider, famous for her fun and smart sayings, said that attorneys ought not to be allowed to play such improbable pranks, and cheat the public by showing off papier-maché children.

So it was to this relatively honest lawyer that Monsieur de Trailles had come for advice, as he never failed to do in every more or less tight place in his career. Desroches, as had long been his habit, listened without interrupting him to the long statement of the case as it was unfolded to him,

including the scene that had just taken place at Rastignac's. As Maxime had no secrets from this confessor, he gave all his reasons for owing Sallenauve an ill turn, and represented him, with perfect conviction, as having stolen the name under which he would sit in the Chamber. His hatred appeared to him in the light of positive evidence of a felony that was hardly probable or possible. In the bottom of his heart Desroches had no wish to undertake a case in which he at once foresaw not the smallest chance of success; and his lax honesty was shown in his talking to his client as if it were a quite ordinary legal matter, and in not telling him point-blank his opinion of an action which was simply an intrigue.

The amount of wrong that is done by such verbal connivance, that never goes so far as active complicity, is really incalculable.—"What concern is it of mine? Let them fight it out! Why should I set up for being the bashful knight of virtue?" This is what men of Desroches' nature are apt to think, and it would be hard to guess at their number in a somewhat advanced state of civilization.

"To begin with, my dear sir," said the attorney, "a civil action is not to be thought of: if your Romilly peasant had her pockets full of proofs, her application would be refused because, so far, she can have no direct interest in disputing the affiliation of the opposing party."

"Yes, that is what Vinet said just now."

"As to a criminal prosecution, that, of course, you might bring about by lodging an information of false personation."

"Vinet seemed in favor of that course," said Maxime.

"Well, but there are many objections to this method of procedure. In the first place, merely to get the information heard, you must have something resembling proof; next, if the information is lodged and the Crown decides to prosecute, to get a verdict there must be far stronger evidence of the felony; and if, after all, the crime were proved against the self-styled Marquis de Sallenauve, how are you to show that

his self-styled son is in the conspiracy, since he may have been deceived by an impostor."

"But what motive could that impostor have," said Maxime, "for giving this Dorlange all the advantages that accrue to him from being recognized as the Marquis de Sallenauve's son?"

"Oh, my dear fellow," replied Desroches, "when you come to State questions, any eccentricity is possible. No sort of trials or actions has furnished so many romances to the compilers of *causes célèbres* or to novelists. But there is another point: the assumption of a false identity is not in itself a crime in the eye of the law."

"How is that?" cried Maxime. "Impossible!"

"Look here, my lord," said Desroches, taking down the *Five Codes,* "have the kindness to read section 145 of the Penal Code—the only one which seems to lend an opening to the action you propose to bring, and see whether the misdemeanor we are discussing is contemplated."

Maxime read aloud section 145, as follows:

"Any functionary or public officer who shall have committed forgery in the exercise of his functions—either by forged signatures, or by defacing and altering deeds, documents, or signatures—or by assuming a false identity——"

"There, you see," said Maxime, "false identity——"

"Read to the end," said Desroches.

"Or by altering or adding to a register or any other public document, after it has been legally attested and sealed, is liable to penal servitude for life."

Monsieur de Trailles rolled the words unctuously on his tongue as a foretaste of the fate in store for Sallenauve.

"My dear Count," said Desroches, "you read as the parties to a suit always do; they never study a point of law but from their own side of the case. You fail to observe that, in this section, mention is made only of 'functionaries and public officers'; it has no bearing on the false identity of any other class of person."

Maxime re-read the paragraph, and saw that Desroches was right.

"Still," he remarked, "there must be something elsewhere to that effect?"

"Nothing of the kind; take my word for it as a lawyer; the Code is absolutely silent on that point."

"Then the crime we should inform against has the privilege of impunity?"

"That is to say," replied Desroches, "that its punishment is doubtful at best. A judge sometimes by induction extends the letter of the law——" He paused to turn over a volume of leading cases.

"Here, you see, reported in Carnot's *Commentaries on the Penal Code,* two judgments delivered at Assizes—one of July 7, 1814, and the other of April 24, 1818, both confirmed in the Court of Appeal, which condemned certain individuals who were neither functionaries nor public officers for assuming false names and identity; but these two verdicts, exceptional in every way, are based on a section in which this particular misdemeanor is not even mentioned, and it was only by very recondite argument that it was brought to bear on the cases. So you will understand that the outcome of such an action must always be doubtful, since, in the absence of any positive rule, it is impossible to say what the judges' decision may be."

"Consequently, it is your opinion, as it is Rastignac's, that we may send our countrywoman back to Romilly, and that there is nothing to be done?"

"There is always something to be done," replied Desroches, "when you know how to set about it. There is a further complication which does not seem to have occurred to you or Monsieur de Rastignac, or even to Monsieur Vinet; and that is that, apart from the legal point, you need authority from the Chamber before you can prosecute a member of the representative body in a criminal court."

"That is true," said Maxime; "but how does a further complication help us out of our difficulty?"

"You would not be sorry, I fancy," said the lawyer, laughing, "to send your enemy to the hulks?"

"A scoundrel," said Maxime, with a droll twinkle, "who has perhaps caused me to miss a good marriage, who sets up for austere virtue, and allows himself such audacious tricks——!"

"Well; you must, nevertheless, put up with some less showy revenge. If you create a scandal, throw utter discredit on your man—that, I suppose, would, to some extent, achieve your end?"

"No doubt; half a loaf is better than no bread."

"Your ideas thus reduced, this is what I should advise: Do not urge your woman to bring an action against this gentleman who annoys you so much, but get her to place a petition for authority to prosecute in the hands of the President of the Chamber. She will most probably not obtain it, and the affair will collapse at that stage; but the fact of the application will be rumored in the Chamber, the papers will have every right to mention it, and the Government will be free, behind the scenes, to add venom to the imputation by the comments of its supporters."

"*Peste!*" exclaimed Maxime, enchanted at seeing an outlet for his instincts of aversion, "you are a clever fellow—far cleverer than all your self-styled statesmen. But as to this petition for leave to prosecute, who can draw that up?"

"Not I," replied Desroches, who did not care to go any further in such dirty work. "What you want is not a judicial document, but a weapon, and that is no part of my business. But there are dozens of attorneys without clients who are always ready to put a finger into a political pie—Massol, for instance, will do your job as well as any man. But I particularly beg that you will not mention me as having originated the idea."

"Not a word," said Maxime. "I will take the responsibility, and in that shape, perhaps, Rastignac may at last swallow the scheme."

"Mind you do not make an enemy of Vinet, for he will think you have taken a great liberty in having thought of a thing that ought at once to have occurred to such a practised parliamentary tactician as he is."

"Oh, before very long," said Maxime, rising, "I hope that Vinet, Rastignac, and the rest well have to reckon with me. —Where are you dining to-night?" he added.

It is a question which one "man about town" often asks another.

"In a cave," said Desroches, "with the banditti."

"Where is it?"

"Why, in the course of your erotic experiences you have, no doubt, had recourse to the good offices of an old wardrobe-buyer named Madame de Saint-Estève?"

"No," said Maxime; "I always manage my own business."

"Ah, I was not thinking," said the lawyer. "You have always been a conqueror in high life, where such go-betweens are not employed. However, the woman's name is not unknown to you?"

"Quite true. Her shop is in the Rue Saint-Marc. It was she who brought about the meeting between Nucingen and that little slut Esther, who cost him something like five hundred thousand francs. She must be related to a villain of the same kidney who is at the head now of the detective force, and goes by the same name."

"That I do not know," replied Desroches. "But I can tell you this much: she made a fortune by her trade as dresser (*appareilleuse,* as it was called at a time when the world was less prudish than it is now), and to-day the worthy lady is magnificently housed in the Rue de Provence, where she is at the head of a matrimonial agency."

"And you are dining there?"

"Yes, my dear sir, with the manager of the Opera House in London, with Émile Blondet, Andoche Finot, Lousteau, Félicien Vernou, Théodore Gaillard, Hector Merlin, and Bixiou, who was instructed to invite me, because my experience and great knowledge of business are to be called into play."

"Bless me! is there some great financial enterprise at the back of that dinner?"

"A joint-stock undertaking, my dear friend, and a theatrical engagement, and I am to read through the two agreements. As regards the last, you understand that the distinguished guests invited to meet me will proceed to blow the trumpet as soon as the deed is signed."

"And who is the star whose engagement needs so much ceremony."

"Oh, a star who may look forward, it would seem, to European glory! An Italian woman discovered by a great Swedish nobleman, Count Halphertius, through the ministrations of Madame de Saint-Estève. To have her brought out on the opera stage in London, the illustrious stranger becomes a sleeping partner with the *Impresario* to the tune of a hundred thousand crowns."

"So the Swedish Count is marrying her?"

"H'm," said Desroches, "I have not as yet been asked to draw up the settlements. Madame de Saint-Estève, as you may suppose, still has some connection with the 'thirteenth *arrondissement*' in her agency business."

"Well, my good fellow, I hope you will enjoy the party," said Maxime, leaving. "If your star is a success in London, we shall probably see her in Paris this winter. I will be off to put a spoke, if I can, in the chariot wheels of the rising sun of Arcis.—By the way, where does Massol live?"

"On my word, I cannot tell you. I have never taken him a brief; I have no use for pleaders who meddle in politics; but you can send for his address to the office of the *Gazette des Tribunaux;* he writes for it, I know."

Maxime himself went to the office to ask where Massol lived; but the office-boy had strict orders not to give his address to anybody, probably with a view to the calls of duns; and in spite of his hectoring tone, Monsieur de Trailles had wasted his time, and could not obtain the information he had come for. He fortunately remembered that Massol rarely missed a performance at the Opera, and he felt tolerably certain of finding him in the lounging-room after dinner.

Before dinner, he went to call at some little furnished lodg-

ings where he had housed the peasant woman and her lawyer, who had already come to Paris. He found them at table, and enjoying a capital dinner at the Beauvisages' expense. He desired them to come to him before breakfast, between eleven and twelve next morning. In the evening he met Massol, as he expected, at the Opera. Addressing him with his usual rather haughty politeness:

"I should like to talk with you, monsieur," said he, "over a partly legal and partly political matter. If it were not necessary to observe the strictest secrecy in every way, I would have had the honor of calling at your office, but I believe we shall discuss it in greater privacy at my house, where I can put you into direct communication with two interested persons. May I hope that you will give me the pleasure of taking a cup of tea with me to-morrow morning soon after eleven?"

If Massol had in fact boasted of an office, for the dignity of his robe he would perhaps not have consented to reverse the usual order of things by going to a client instead of receiving him at home. But as he perched rather than lodged in his room, he was glad of an arrangement which preserved the *incognito* of his residence.

"I shall have the honor of waiting on you to-morrow at the hour you name," he eagerly replied.

"You know," said Maxime, "the Rue Pigalle?"

"Perfectly," replied Massol, "close to the Rue de la Rochefoucauld."

On the evening when Sallenauve, Marie-Gaston, and Jacques Bricheteau had gone together to Saint-Sulpice to hear Signora Luigia sing, a little incident had occurred in the church which had scarcely been noticed. Through the little-used door, opening on the Rue Palatine, opposite the Rue Servandoni, a fair-haired youth hastily came in. He seemed so agitated and hurried that he even forgot to take off a cap of shiny leather, shaped like those worn by the students at German universities. As he pushed forward to where the crowd was thickest, he felt himself gripped

by the arm, and his face, which was florid and rosy, turned lividly pale; but on turning round he saw that he had been alarmed without cause. It was only the *Suisse,* or beadle, who said in impressive tones:

"Young man, is your cap nailed to your head?"

"I beg pardon, monsieur," said the youth. "It was an oversight."

And after obeying this lesson in reverence, human and divine, he lost himself in the densest part of the crowd, through which he roughly made his way with his elbows, getting a few blows in return, about which he did not trouble himself. Having reached an open space, he looked round with a hasty, anxious eye; then leaving by the door on the side to the Rue Garancière, almost opposite to that he had come in by, he flew off at a great pace, and vanished down one of the deserted streets that lie about the Marché Saint-Germain.

A few seconds after the irruption of this strange worshiper, in at the same door came a man with a deeply-seamed face framed in white whiskers; thick hair, also white, but somewhat rusty, and falling to his shoulders, gave him the look of some old member of the Convention, or of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre after having the smallpox. The age of his face and hair was well past sixty; but his robust frame, the vigorous energy of his movements, and, above all, the piercing sharpness of the look he flashed all round the church as he came in, showed a strongly-knit nature, on which the advance of years had told but little.

He obviously was bent on following the light-haired youth, but he was not so clumsy as to rush after him through the mass of people in front of the high altar, in which, as he understood, the fugitive had tried to be lost. So, working round the building close to the wall, in a contrary direction, he had every chance of reaching the other door as soon as his prey; but, as has happened to many another, his cleverness played him a trick. As he passed a confessional, he perceived a kneeling form very like that of the man he was

chasing. Attributing to him an ingenuity that would, no doubt, have been his in similar circumstances, it struck him that, to put him off the scent, his escaped victim had suddenly thrown himself on the penitential tribunal. In the time it took him to make sure of the man's identity, which as we know was not confirmed, he was outstripped. So practised a hunter at once gave up the useless chase; he understood that the game was up for to-day, and he had missed his chance.

He too was about to leave the church, when, after a brief prelude on the organ, Signora Luigia's contralto voice in a few deep notes began the glorious melody to which the *Litanies to the Virgin* are sung. The beauty of her voice, the beauty of the strain, the beauty of the words of that sacred hymn, which her admirable style gave out with perfect distinctness, seemed to impress this strange man deeply. Far from leaving, as he had intended, he took his stand in the shadow of a pillar, not looking for a seat; but at the moment when the last notes of the canticle died away, he had fallen on his knees, and any one looking at his face would have seen that two large tears were trickling down his cheeks.

The *Benedicite* having been pronounced, and the greater part of the crowd having left the church:

"What a fool I am!" said he, as he rose and wiped his eyes.

He went out by the same door as he had come in by, turning up the Rue Servandoni, paused for a moment in front of a closed shop, went on to the Place Saint-Sulpice, and getting into one of the hackney cabs that stood there, he said to the driver:

"Rue de Provence, and look sharp, my good fellow. It will be worth your while."

On reaching the house where he stopped the coach, he ran past the gatekeeper's lodge and made for the backstairs, not wishing to be seen; but the porter, who was conscientious in the discharge of his duty, came to his door and called after him:

"Pray, where are you going, sir?"

"To Madame de Saint-Estève," replied the visitor in a tone of annoyance.

Immediately after he rang at a back door, which was opened by a negro.

"Is my aunt in?" he asked.

"Oh yes, Missy at home," replied the black man, putting on the most gracious smile he could command, which made him look like an ape cracking nuts.

Making his way along the passages, which gave an idea of the extent of the apartments, the newcomer reached the drawing-room door; the negro threw it open, announcing "Monsieur Saint-Hèsteve," with a violent aspirate.

The head of the detective police went into a room remarkable for it magnificence, but yet more so for the extraordinary bad taste of the furniture. Three women of venerable antiquity were sitting at a round table, solemnly playing dominoes. Three glasses, a silver bowl drained empty, and a vinous perfume that was unpleasantly conspicuous on coming into the room, showed that the worship of the double-sixes was not the only cultus solemnized there.

"Good-evening, ladies," said the great man, taking a chair, "I am glad to find you all together, for I have something to say to each of you."

"We will listen presently," said his aunt; "let us finish the game. I am playing for fours."

"Double-blank," said one of the antiquities.

"Domino!" cried Madame de Saint-Estève, "and game. You two must certainly have four points between you, and all the blanks are out."

So speaking, she put out a bony hand to take the punch-ladle and fill the glasses; but finding the bowl empty, instead of rising to pull the bell, she rang a peal with the spoon in the silver bason. The negro came in.

"Have something put into that," said she, handing it to him; "and bring a glass for monsieur."

"Thanks; I will take nothing," said Saint-Estève.

"I have had a sufficiency," said one of the old ladies.

"And I have been put upon milk," said the other, "by the doctor, on account of my gastripes."

"You are all milksops together," said the mistress of the house.—"Here, clear all this away," said she to the negro; "and, above all, don't let me catch you listening at the door! You remember the clawing you got?"

"Oh yes—I 'member," said the man, his shoulders shaking with laughter—"me got no ears now."

And he went away.

"Well, Tommy, it is your turn now," said the old aunt to Saint-Estève, after a stormy settlement of accounts between the three witches.

"You, Madame Fontaine," said the head detective, turning to one of them, who by her fly-away looks, her disorderly gray hair and her frightfully crooked green silk bonnet, might have been taken for a blue-stocking in labor with an article on the fashions, "you forget yourself too much; you never send us in any report, while, on the contrary, we hear too many reports about you. Monsieur le Préfet does not at all care for establishments of your class. I only keep you going for the sake of the services you are supposed to do us; but without pretending, as you do, to look into the future, I can positively predict that if you continue to afford us so little information, your fortune-telling shop will be shut before long."

"There you go!" retorted the pythoness. "You prevented my taking the rooms Mademoiselle Lenormand had in the Rue de Tournon. Who do you suppose will come to me in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple? Poor clerks, cooks, laborers, and apprentice girls! And you want me to go tattling to you of what I pick up from such folks? You should have let me work on a large scale, and you would have got more information."

"Madame Fontaine, you didn't ought to say that," said Madame de Saint-Estève; "why, I send some of my customers to you most days."

"Not more than I send you mine!"

"And not above four days since," the matrimonial agent went on, "that Italian woman went to you from me. She is not a milliner's apprentice, she is not; and she lives with a deputy who is against the Government! You might have reported that. But you do not care to use your pen; and since you quarreled with your little counter-jumper for having too many waistcoats from the tailor, no more writing for you!"

"There is one thing in particular," said the detective, "which is constantly mentioned in the reports that reach me about you—that foul creature you make use of in your divinations——"

"Who? Ashtaroth?" asked Madame Fontaine.

"Yes; that batrachian, that toad, to speak plainly, whom you pretend to consult. A little while since it would seem a woman was so upset by his horrible appearance that she——"

"There, there," the fortune-teller broke in, "if I am to do nothing now but read the cards, you may as well ruin me at once—cut my throat and have done with it! Because a woman has a still-born child, are you going to get rid of toads altogether in this world? If so, what did God create them for?"

"My dear madame," said the man, "there was a time when you would have been less partial to such help. In 1617 a philosopher named Vanini was burned at Toulouse solely because he kept a toad in a bottle."

"Ay, but we live in an age of enlightenment," said Madame Fontaine cheerfully, "and the police are not so hard upon us."

"You, Madame Nourrisson," said the detective, turning to the other old woman, "pick the fruit too green, I am told. Having kept shop so long as you have, you must be well aware of the laws and regulations, and I am surprised at having to remind you that morals must be respected—under one-and-twenty."

Madame Nourrisson had, in fact, been, under the Empire, what Parent du Châtelet (whose work is such a curious study of the great plague of prostitution) euphemistically called a *Dame de Maison*. She had afterwards set up in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc the shop for buying and selling old clothes, where the business of Esther had been managed, to which Maxime de Trailles had referred as having cost Nucingen the banker more than five hundred thousand francs. But on that occasion Madame Nourrisson had screened herself behind Madame Saint-Estève; and she, advised by Vautrin in conducting the affair, had for the time used the old clothes-dealer's shop as the headquarters of her operations. Between persons who have memories of such complicity, extreme familiarity is a foregone conclusion; so it is not surprising that Madame Nourrisson should retort on Saint-Estève for the lecture he had given her:

"And you, you great bully, you respected morality, I supposed when, in 1809, you placed that girl of seventeen from Champagne in my care——!"

"If it is thirty years since that folly was committed in my name," replied the man, "that is thirty years' record in my favor; for it was the last into which I was ever drawn by a petticoat. However, dear ladies, you can make such use as you please of my warnings. If mischief overtakes you, you cannot now complain that you had not due notice.

"As to you, my little aunt, what I have to say to you is private and confidential."

At this hint the other two prepared to leave.

"Shall I send for a cab for you?" Madame de Saint-Estève asked Madame Fontaine.

"No, indeed," said the fortune-teller. "I am going to walk; I am told to take exercise. I told my forewoman, Ma'am Jamouillot, to come for me."

"And you, Madame Nourrisson?"

"That's a good 'un!" said the woman. "A cab to go from the Rue de Provence to the Rue Neuve-Saint-Marc! Why, we are quite near neighbors."

In point of fact, the old-clothes woman had come in everyday attire: a white cap with yellow ribbons, a patent front of jet black curls, a black silk apron, and a cotton print gown with a dark blue ground; and, as she said facetiously, it was most unlikely that any one should want to run away with her.

Before reporting the interview now about to take place between Monsieur de Saint-Estève and his aunt, some explanations must find a place here.

In this public protector, who on the evening of the outbreak on the 12th of May had offered his services to Rastignac, every reader will have recognized the notorious Jacques Collin, *alias* Vautrin, one of the most familiar and elaborately drawn figures of the HUMAN COMEDY.

A little while before the revolution of 1830, this hero of the hulks, very hard hit by the death of a friend, lost heart to carry on the struggle he had maintained for five-and-twenty years against society, and had given in his resignation, so to speak, to Monsieur de Granville, the Attorney-General, under somewhat dramatic circumstances. Since that time he had succeeded the famous Bibi-Lupin as head of the detective police force, under the name of Monsieur de Saint-Estève; he was now the terror of those who had formerly been his accomplices; and by the unrelenting persecution by which he harried them, he had acquired a reputation for skill and energy which remains unmatched in the annals of the criminal police.

But, as he had told his old friend Colonel Franchessini, he was tired of this perpetual thief-hunting; there was no longer any hazard or anything unforeseen in the game; and, like a too experienced gambler, he had ceased to take an interest in it. For some years there had been still some spice in the business, and that had given him endurance from the endless attacks and ambushes planned against him by his old *chums* on the hulks, who were furious at what they called his treason; but by this time his cleverness and his good luck, which had always protected him from their conspiracies, had discouraged

his foes, and they had laid down their arms. Since then his duties had lost all their charm; he was anxious to change his sphere of employment and transfer his marvelous instincts as a spy and his indefatigable energy to that of politics.

Colonel Franchessini had taken care to see him again after his visit to Rastignac; and his old fellow-boarder at Madame Vauquier's was not the man to underestimate the purport of the Minister's views as to the luxury of such a plain citizen life as he had suggested to cast oblivion on the odious past that weighed on him.

"Haha!" said he, "the pupil then has outstripped his master! His advice deserves consideration; I will think about it."

In fact, he had thought about it, and it was under the influence of much meditation and careful examination of the scheme proposed to him that he had now come to see his aunt Jacqueline Collin—otherwise known as Madame de Saint-Estève—an *alias* they had agreed to adopt, which, while masking the past history of this formidable pair, marked their close relationship.

Jacqueline Collin herself, besides taking an active part in many of her nephew's enterprises, had led an adventurous life; and on one of the many occasions when Vautrin found himself at variance with the law, an examining judge had thus summed up the antecedent history of this much-respected aunt, from certain data furnished by the police, of which there is no reason to doubt the accuracy:—

"She is, it would seem, an extremely cunning receiver of stolen goods—for no proof can be brought against her. She is said to have been Murat's mistress, and after his death she lived with a chemist, executed in the year VIII. (1799) as a false coiner. She was witness at the trial. While with him she acquired much dangerous knowledge of poisons. From the year IX. till 1805, she dealt in old clothes. She was in prison for two years, 1807-8, for entrapping girls under age.

"You, Jacques Collin, were at that time on your trial for forgery; you had left the banking house where your aunt had

apprenticed you as clerk under favor of the education you had received and the influence she could wield over persons for whose depravity she had entrapped victims."

Since the time when this edifying biography had been placed in her nephew's hands, Jacqueline Collin, without falling again into the clutches of the public prosecutor, had enlarged her borders; and when Vautrin renounced the ways of wickedness, she was far from assuming an equally immaculate garb of innocence. But having—as he had—made a great deal of money, she would now pick and choose; she had kept at a safe distance from the arm of the law; and under the pretence of a more or less decent line of business, she had carried on certain underground practices, to which she devoted really diabolical intelligence and energy.

We have already learned from Desroches that the more or less matrimonial agency managed by Madame de Saint-Estève was situated in the Rue de Provence; and we may add that it was carried on on an extensive scale, occupying all the first floor of one of the enormous houses which Paris builders raise from the earth as if by magic. They are scarcely finished, and never free from debt, when they are filled with tenants, at any price, while waiting for a buyer to whom they are sold out of hand. If the builder finds a fool to deal with, he does a fine stroke of business; if, on the other hand, the purchaser is a tough customer, the builder has to be content with recovering his outlay, with a few thousand francs as interest; unless, while the work is going on, the speculation has been hampered by one of those bankruptcies which in the building trade are among the commonest and most familiar complications.

Women of the town, business agents, still-born insurance companies, newspapers fated to die young, the offices of impossible railway companies, discount brokers who borrow instead of lending, advertisement agents, who lack the publicity they profess to sell; in short, all descriptions of shy or doubtful enterprise and trade combine to provide the temporary inhabitants of these republics.

They are built merely for show, *run up* with perfect indifference to the fact that in the course of a few months settlement will hinder the windows from opening, warping will split the doors, the seams of the flooring will yawn, the drains, gutter-pipes, and sinks will leak, and the whole cardboard structure be uninhabitable. That is the purchaser's business; and he, after patching the house up, is at liberty to be more fastidious in the choice of his tenants, and to raise the rents.

Madame de Saint-Estève having taken possession of her first floor before the stage of early decay had set in, had secured a very comfortable tenement at a low rent; and the best success, to say nothing of her profits from other unconfessed sources, crowned the efforts of her skilful management. It need hardly be said that Madame de Saint-Estève, regarding the display of advertisement as beneath her notice, left it to her rivals, and never flaunted her *office* on the fourth page of a newspaper. This haughtiness, which, in view of the dark passages of her early life, was but prudent, had led to her discovering some other ingenious and less vulgar methods for attracting attention to her *agency*. In the country, and even abroad, she would employ certain clever commercial travelers, who cautiously distributed a circular drawn up by Gaudissart, one of the most remarkable puff-writers of modern times.

The ostensible object of this document was to offer the assistance of a strictly commercial agency through which, on the most moderate terms, wedding outfits and presents could be procured from Paris, suitable to every fortune or sum in settlement. It was only as a modest *N.B.*, after an estimate of cost of the objects commonly included in such lists, divided, somewhat like an undertaker's prospectus, into first, second, third, and fourth classes, that Madame de Saint-Estève hinted at her "being enabled, through her high social connections, to facilitate introductions between persons wishing to marry."

In Paris the lady herself appealed to public credulity, and

her means were as ingenious as they were various. She made a bargain with a job-master, who sent two or three decent-looking carriages to stand for hours at her door. Then, in her waiting-room, supposed clients of both sexes, well dressed, and affecting great impatience, took it in turns to come in and out, so as to suggest a constant crowd; and, as may be supposed, the conversation of these confederates—who pretended not to know each other—expatiated in suitable terms on the merits and superior adroitness of Madame de Saint-Estève.

The ingenious adventuress, by some donations to the poor, and to the charities of Notre-Dame de Lorette, her parish, got an occasional call from a priest, which was at once a voucher of respectability and of the genuineness of her matrimonial undertakings. Another of her ingenious tricks was to keep herself supplied by the market-woman with lists of all the fashionable weddings in Paris, and to be seen in the church very handsomely dressed, arriving in a carriage with men-servants, so as to allow it to be inferred that she had had something to do with bringing about the union she had honored with her presence.

On one occasion, however, a not very tolerant family objected to the idea of serving her purpose of advertisement, and had treated her with contumely; so she was now cautious as to how she tried this plan for which she had substituted a system of rumor less compulsory and far less dangerous. Having known Madame Fontaine for many years—for there is a natural affinity among all these underground traffickers—she had plotted with her for a sort of reciprocal insurance company for working on the credulity of the Parisians; and between these two hags the terms were thus arranged: when a woman goes to have her fortune told, at least eight times out of ten her curiosity turns on the question of marriage. So when the sorceress announced to one of her fair clients in time-honored phraseology, that she would ere long meet her fate in the person of a light-haired or a dark-haired man, she took care to add: "But the union can only be brought about

through the agency of Madame de Saint-Estève, a very rich and highly respectable woman, living in the Rue de Provence Chaussée-d'Antin, who has a passion for match-making." While Madame de Saint-Estève on her part, when she proposed a match, if she thought there was any chance of thus promoting its success, would say: "But go at any rate and consult the famous Madame Fontaine as to the outcome of the negotiation—Rue Vieille-du-Temple—her reputation as a fortune-teller by the cards is European; she never makes a mistake; and if she tells you that I have made a good hit, you may conclude the bargain in perfect confidence."

It may easily be understood that the Numa of the Rue Sainte-Anne should have taken so resourceful a woman for his Egeria.

Rastignac's informant had not been quite correct in saying that the aunt and nephew lived together; but it was perfectly true that Vautrin, when business allowed of it, never passed a day without coming, as mysteriously as possible, to visit his respectable relation. For many years, if any serious incident occurred in his life, Jacqueline Collin had a finger in it as his adviser, and often as his active assistant.

"My dear granny!" said Vautrin, to begin the conversation for which he had come, "I have so many things to tell you that I do not know where to begin."

"I believe you—why, I have not seen you for nearly a week."

"To begin with, I may as well tell you that I just missed a splendid stroke of business."

"What sort?" asked Jacqueline Collin.

"Oh, all in the way of my vile trade. But this time the game was worth the trouble.—Do you remember that little Prussian engraver about whom I sent you to Berlin?"

"Who forged the Vienna banknotes in such an astounding manner?" said the aunt, finishing the story.

"Well, not an hour ago in the Rue Servandoni, where I had been to see one of my men who is on the sick list, passing by a greengrocer's shop, I fancied I recognized my man buying a slice of Brie cheese, which was being wrapped in paper."

"It would seem that he is not much the richer then, for all he knows so much about banknotes——"

"My first thought," Vautrin went on, "was to rush into the shop—the door was shut—and to collar my rogue; but, not having seen his face very close, I was afraid of being mistaken. He, it would seem, had kept a lookout; he saw some one spying him through the window, and presto! he vanished into the back-shop, and I saw him no more——"

"Then, old boy, that is what comes of wearing long hair and a beard all round your chin. The game scents you a hundred yards away!"

"But then, as you know, my fancy for being easily recognized is what most impresses my customers. 'He must be jolly well sure of himself,' they say, 'never to want any disguise!'—Nothing has done so much to make me popular."

"Well," said Jacqueline, "so your man was in the back-shop."

"I hastily took stock of the premises," Vautrin went on. "The shop was on one side of an arched entry; at the bottom of the entry the door was open to a courtyard, into which there would be a door from the back-shop; consequently, unless the fellow lived in the house, I was in command of all the exits. I waited about a quarter of an hour; it is a long time when you are waiting. I looked into the shop in vain, no sign of him. Three customers went in; the woman served them without seeming to be aware of any one keeping an eye on her, she never gave a glance one way or the other, or seemed at all on the watch. 'Well!' said I to myself at last, 'he must be a lodger; if not, the woman would certainly have been more puzzled at his going out the back way.' So I determined to drop in and ask a question or two. Pff! I had scarcely crossed the threshold when I heard steps in the street—the bird had flown."

"You were in too great a hurry, my dear. And yet, only the other day you said to me—'Police spells patience.' "

"Without waiting for further information," said Vautrin, "I was off in pursuit. Exactly facing the Rue Servandoni—

the name of the architect who built Saint Sulpice—there is a door into the church, which was open because of the month of Mary, service being held there every afternoon. My rascal having the advantage of me, flew through this door, and was so effectually lost in the crowd, that when I went in I could nowhere find him."

"Well," said the woman, "I cannot be sorry that the rascal stole a march on you. I always feel some interest in a smasher. Coining is a neat sort of crime, and clean; no blood spilt, no harm done but to that mean hunks the Government."

"And the Frankfort house that was ruined by his forgeries."

"You may say what you like; it is better form than your Lucien de Rubempré, who ate us out of house and home. Now, if you had but had a lad like this under your thumb in our best days!——"

"In spite of your admiration, you will have to go to-morrow and pick up some information from the greengrocer woman, who must certainly know him, since she winked at his escape. When I went back to the shop I found shutters and doors all shut up. I had lost some time in the church——"

"Listening to a singer, I bet," interrupted the aunt.

"Quite true. How did you know?"

"Why, all Paris is crowding to hear her," replied Jacqueline Collin, "and I know her too, in my own little way."

"What! That voice that touched me so deeply, that took me back fifty years to my first communion under the good Oratorian fathers, who brought me up—that woman who made me cry, and transformed me for five minutes into a saint—and you have her on your books——?"

"Yes," said Madame de Saint-Estève carelessly, "I have a transaction on hand for her: I am getting her on to the stage."

"Aha! So you are a dramatic agent too? Matrimony is not enough?"

"This is the case in two words, my boy. She is an Italian,

as handsome as can be, come from Rome with an idiot of a sculptor, whom she worships without his suspecting it. Indeed, this Joseph cares so little about her, that after using her as his model for a statue, he has never yet been at the pains to be more than civil."

"That is a man who ought to do well in his art," remarked Jacques Collin, "with such a contempt for women and so much strength of mind."

"And the proof of that," replied Jacqueline, "is that he has just given his art up to become a member of the Chamber. It was about him that I said to old Fontaine that she might have found something to write to you. I sent my Italian to her, and she told the cards as regards this ice-bound lover."

"And how did you come to know the woman?"

"Through old Ronquerolles. Having gone to see the sculptor one day, in the matter of a duel in which he was second, he saw this jewel of a woman, and became quite Nucingen about her."

"And you undertook the negotiations?"

"As you say. It was above a month ago, and the poor man had had all his pains for nothing. Now I, having the matter in hand, made inquiries; I found out that the beauty was a member of the Sisters of the Virgin; thereupon I called on her as a *Dame de Charité,* and imagine what luck for me as a beginning—the sculptor was in the country getting himself elected——"

"I have no fears about you; at the same time, a lady of charity who undertakes a theatrical agency——!"

"By the time I had seen her twice she had told me all her little secrets," the old woman went on. "That she could no longer bear life with that man of marble; that she was determined to owe nothing to him; and that having studied for the stage, if she could only secure an engagement, she would run away. So one day I went off to her and arrived quite out of breath to tell her that a friend of mine—a great lord, highly respectable, old, virtuous—to whom I had spoken of her, would undertake to get her an opening, and I asked her to let me take him to see her."

"A word and a blow!" said Jacques Collin.

"Yes; but she, a devil for suspiciousness, and less bent on deserting her sculptor than she had thought, kept me, shilly-shally, from day to day. So at last, to give her a shove, I hinted that she should go to consult old Fontaine, as indeed she was ready enough to do. But even now, in spite of the cards, she is still very wide awake, and the job is spoiling, I fear, for she has seen her man again; he has come back elected.

"It is of no use to talk; I must proceed with caution. If he should make difficulties about our enticing away the woman, whom he would perhaps think he wanted as soon as she ceased to want him, he would hold a very strong hand. And that selfish old brute Ronquerolles, who is only a member of the Upper House, would not be much protection against a deputy of the Chamber——"

"That old rip Ronquerolles is not the man for that woman," said Jacques Collin. "If she is an honest woman, we must keep her so. I know a really respectable man who will get her on to the stage on honorable terms, and secure her a splendid position without asking for anything in return."

"What! you know of any such phenomenon? I should be truly glad to have his address; I would leave a card on him."

"All right—Petite Rue Sainte-Anne, Quai des Orfèvres; you will find a man there of your acquaintance."

"Are you guying me?" cried the woman, who in her astonishment fell back on the low slang which she had spoken so fluently of yore.

"No, I am quite serious. That woman touched me; she interests me; and I have another reason——"

Vautrin then related his proceedings with regard to Rastignac, Colonel Franchessini's intervention, the Minister's reply, and his transcendental theories of social reorganization.

"And that little ape thinks he can teach us!" exclaimed the aunt.

"He is in the right," said Vautrin, "only the woman was wanting; you have found her for me."

"Yes, but it will be sheer ruination."

"And for whom are we saving? We have no heirs, and I do not suppose you feel urgently drawn to found a hospital, or prizes for distinguished merit?"

"I am not such a softhead," replied the woman. "Besides, as you know, my Jacques, I have never kept an account against you. Still, I foresee one difficulty: this woman is as proud as a Roman—which she is, and your confounded duties——"

"There, you see," Jacques Collin eagerly put in, "I must at any price escape from a life where one is liable to such insults. But be easy; I can avert this particular offence. My business justifies me in playing every part in turn; and, as you will remember, I am not a bad actor. I may put a whole rainbow of orders in my button-hole to-morrow and take a house in any aristocratic name I may choose to assume. The fun of the carnival lasts all the year round for a detective.

"I had already hit on a plan. I know the man I mean to be. You may tell your Italian that Count Halphertius—a great Swedish lord, crazy about music and philanthropy—takes a great interest in her advancement. In point of fact, I will furnish a house for her; I will strictly observe the virtuous disinterestedness to which you may pledge me; in short, I will be her recognized patron. As to the engagement she wishes for, I wish it too; for my own future purpose I want her to be glorious and brilliant; and we are not Jacques and Jacquelin Collin if, with her gifts and our gold and determination, we fail in making her so."

"But then comes the question whether Rastignac will think you have won; it was Monsieur de Saint-Estève, the head of the detective police, that he told you to whitewash."

"Not at all, old lady. There is no such person as Saint-Estève, no Jacques Collin, no Vautrin, no Trompe-la-Mort, no Carlos Herrera; there is a remarkably powerful mind, strong and vigorous, offering its services to the Government. I am bringing it from the North, and christening it with a foreign name, and this makes me all the better fitted for the

political and diplomatic police whose functions I henceforth intend to exercise."

"You forge ahead! it is wonderful. But first we must catch the jewel who is to make such a show for you, and we have not got her yet."

"That is no difficulty; I have seen you at work, and when you will you can."

"I will try," said Jacqueline Collin diffidently. "Come and see me again to-morrow night, at any rate; perhaps I may have something to show."

"And meanwhile do not forget the greengrocer's shop in the Rue Servandoni, No. 12, where you are to make inquiries. That capture, as being important to a foreign government, has a political air about it that would be of service towards helping me to my end."

"I will give you a good account of the shopwoman, never fear," said Jacqueline. "But the other affair is rather more ticklish; we must not handle it roughly."

"You have a free hand," replied Vautrin. "I have always found you equal to any undertaking, however difficult. So good-bye till to-morrow."

On the following day Vautrin was sitting in his office in the Petite Rue Sainte-Anne when he received the following note:

"You are not much to be pitied, old boy; everything is working out as you want it. Early this morning I was told that a lady wished to speak to me. Who should come in but our Italian, to whom I had given my address in case she should need me in a hurry. Her Joseph having spoken last evening, in cheerful terms, of his intention that they should part company, the poor dear had not closed her eyes all night, and her little brain is in such a pother that she came straight to me, begging me to introduce her to my respectable friend, in whose hands she is prepared to place herself if he is to be trusted, because she feels it a point of honor to owe nothing more to that icicle who can disdain her.—So come at once in

the new skin you have chosen, and then it is your business to make your way to the charmer's good graces.

"Your affectionate aunt,

"J. C. DE SAINT-ESTÈVE."

Vautrin replied:

"I will be with you this evening at nine. I hope the change in my decorative treatment will be so handsome that if I had not told you the name I shall assume, you would find it difficult to recognize me. I have already taken steps in the matter of the engagement, and can speak of it in such a way that the charmer will form a good idea of her *Papa's* influence.

"Sell some stock out in the course of the day for a rather considerable sum; we must have ready money; I, on my part, will do the same.—Till this evening,

"Your nephew and friend,

"SAINT-ESTÈVE."

That evening, punctual to the hour he had fixed, Vautrin went to his aunt's rooms. On this occasion he went up the main staircase, and was announced as Monsieur le Comte Halphertius by the negro, who did not recognize him.

Warned though she was of his metamorphosis, Jacqueline stood in amazement at this really great actor, who was altogether another man. His long hair, *à la* Franklin, was now short and curled and powdered; his eyebrows and whiskers, cutlet-shaped, in the style of the Empire, were dyed dark brown, in strong contrast with the powdered wig; and a false moustache of the same hue gave his not naturally noble features a stamp of startling originality, which might, by a stretch of imagination, be called distinction. A black satin stock gave deportment to his head. He wore a blue tail-coat, buttoned across, and in one button-hole an inch of ribbon displayed the colors of half the orders of Europe. A nankeen waistcoat, visible below the coat-front, effected a harmonious transition to pearl-gray trousers; patent leather boots and lemon kid gloves completed the "get-up," which aimed at

careless elegance. The powder, of which the last wearers could now easily be counted, gave the crowning touch to an old foreign diplomate, and a very happy sobriety to a costume which, but for that corrective, might have appeared too juvenile.

After giving a few minutes to admiration of his disguise, Vautrin asked his aunt:

"Is she here?"

"Yes," said Jacqueline. "The angel retired to her room half an hour ago to tell her beads, now that she is deprived of attending the services of the month of Mary. But she impatiently awaits your visit, seeing how I have sung your praises all day."

"And what does she think of your house? Does she repent of the step she has taken?"

"Her pride would in any case be too great to allow of her showing such a feeling. Besides, I have cleverly won her confidence, and she is one of those persons who are determined never to look back when once they have started."

"The best of the joke," said Vautrin, "is that her Deputy, who is worried about her, was sent to me by Monsieur le Préfet that I might help him to find her."

"He wants her, then?"

"He is not in love with her, you understand, but he considered her as being in his care, and he was afraid that she might have taken it into her head to kill herself, or might have fallen into the hands of some intriguing woman. And you know that, but for my fatherly intervention, he would have laid his finger on the spot."

"And what did you say to your flat?"

"Oh, of course I allowed him to hope, but really and truly I was sorry not to be able to do what he asked me. I took a fancy to him at once; he has a pleasant way with him, energetic and clever, and it strikes me that our friends the Ministry will find him a pretty tough customer."

"So much the worse for him; he should not have driven the dear child to extremities," said the aunt. "And the engagement, for which you said you had the irons in the fire?"

"You know what a queer thing luck is, my beauty," replied Vautrin, taking out a newspaper. "Good or bad, it always comes in squalls. This morning, after receiving your letter, which brought me such good news, I opened this theatrical journal and read this paragraph: 'The Italian opera season in London, which began so badly by the lawsuit that brought to light the pecuniary difficulties under which Sir Francis Drake's management is struggling, seems still further embarrassed by the serious illness of la Serboni, necessitating her absence from the stage for an indefinite period. Sir Francis arrived yesterday at the *Hôtel des Princes,* Rue de Richelieu, having come in search of two *desiderata*—a prima donna and some funds. But the hapless impresario is moving in a vicious circle; for without money no prima donna, and without a prima donna no money.

"'We may hope, however, that he will escape from this deadlock; for Sir Francis Drake has a character for being honest and intelligent, and with such a reputation he will surely not find every door closed against him.'"

"Men of the world are your journalists!" said the old aunt with a knowing air. "Is every door to be thrown open because a man is honest and intelligent?"

"In the present case," said Vautrin, "the phrase is not so far wrong; for the moment I had read the article I figged myself out, as you see, took a private fly, and went off to the address given.

"'Sir Francis Drake?' I ask.

"'I do not know whether he can see you, sir,' says the gentleman's gentleman, coming forward; he was there, I strongly suspect, to give the same answer to any one who might call. 'He is with the Baron de Nucingen.'

"I made believe to look through a pocket-book well stuffed with banknotes for a card, which, of course, I had not got.

"'Well,' said I, with a slight German accent and a sprinkling of Germanisms, "I am Count Halphertius, a Swedish gentleman. Tell Sir Francis Drake I had come for to discuss some business. I shall go to the Bourse, where I give some orders to my broker, and I shall come back after a half-hour.'

"Saying this in the most lordly tone, I went back to my carriage. I had hardly set foot on the step when the lackey, running after me, said he had made a mistake; that Monsieur de Nucingen was gone, and his master could see me at once."

"Trying their games on us!" said Jacqueline Collin, with a shrug.

"Sir Francis Drake," Vautrin went on, "is a regular Englishman, very bald, with a red nose, and large prominent yellow teeth. He received me with frigid politeness, and asked me in good French what my business was.

"'Just now,' said I, 'at the Café de Paris, I read this,' and I handed him the paper, pointing to the place.

"'It is inconceivable,' said he, returning me the newspaper, 'that a man's credit should be thus cried down publicly.'

"'The journalist is wrong? You have no want of money?'

"'You may imagine, monsieur, that I should not in any case try to obtain it through the medium of a theatrical journal.'

"'Very good! Then have we nothing to talk about?' said I, rising. 'I come to put some money in your business.'

"'I would rather you had a prima donna to offer me!' said he.

"'I offer you both,' said I, sitting down again. 'One not without the other.'

"'A well-known talent?' asked the impresario.

"'Not at all known,' replied I. 'Never seen yet at any theatre.'

"'Hum—risky,' said the gentleman with a cunning look. 'The protectors of youthful talent often make great mistakes.'

"'But I offer you a hundred thousand crowns—as an investment—for you only for to listen to my nightingale.'

"'That would be a large sum for so little trouble, and but a small one as a help to my management if it were in such difficulties as your paper says.'

"'Well, then, hear us for nothing; if we are what you want, and you make a handsome offer, I will put down twice so much.'

"'You speak with a freedom that invites confidence; from what country is your young *prima?*'

"'Roman—of Rome—a pure-bred Italian, and very handsome. You may believe if I am interested in her; I went mad about her, only for that I had heard her a long way off in a church. I did not see her till afterwards.'

"'But it strikes me,' said the Englishman, 'that women do not sing in church in Italy.'"

"Well!" said Madame de Saint-Estève, "are there churches nowhere but in Italy?"

"Precisely," said Vautrin. "I felt that to give some appearance of reality to my disguise and my proceedings, I must assume some suspicion of eccentricity; so seizing the opportunity of getting up a German quarrel:

"'I beg to remark, monsieur,' said I in a very pugnacious tone, 'that you have done me the honor to give me the lie.'

"'What!' said the Englishman in amazement, 'nothing could be further from my thoughts.'

"'It is plainly so, all the same,' said I. 'I tell you, I heard the signora in church; you say, "Women do not sing in church in Italy"—that is so much as to say I shall not have heard her.'

"'But you *may* have heard her in another country.'

"'You should have thought of that,' said I, in the same quarrelsome tone, 'before you made that remark—extraordinary remark. At any rate, I see we shall not agree. The signora can wait till the Italian Opera opens in Paris in October. Artists get much better known here. So, Monsieur Drake, I wish you a good-morning.' And I really seemed about to leave."

"Well played!" said his aunt.

In all the most risky affairs undertaken by them in common, they had always duly considered the artistic side.

"Well, to make a long story short," said Vautrin, "having thus brought my man to the sticking-point, we parted on these terms—I am to put down a hundred thousand crowns in money, the signora gets fifty thousand francs for the re-

mainder of the season, supposing her voice is satisfactory; and, to judge of her quality, we are to meet to-morrow at two o'clock at Pape's, where Sir Francis Drake will have brought two or three friends to assist him, to whose presence I have consented. We are to be supposed to have gone to choose a piano. I said, just to keep up the game, that the lady might be terrified at the solemnity of a formal hearing, and that we are more sure in this way of knowing what she can really do."

"But I say, old boy," said Jacqueline, "a hundred thousand crowns is a lot of money!"

"Just the sum that I inherited from that poor boy Lucien de Rubempré," said Vautrin carelessly. "However, I have gone into the matter. Sir Francis Drake, with some one to back him, may have a very good season.—There is my secretary, Théodore Calvi, who is mine for life or death. He is very alert on all questions of interest. I have secured him the place of cashier, and he will keep an eye on the partner's profits. Now, there is but one thing that I am anxious about. Signora Luigia moved me deeply, but I am no connoisseur; artists may not think of her as I do."

"Artists have pronounced on her, my ducky; her sculptor never thought of giving her the key of the fields till she had been heard by a certain Jacques Bricheteau, an organist and a first-rate musician. They were at Saint-Sulpice the very evening of your pious fit, and the organist declared that the woman had sixty thousand francs in her voice whenever she pleased—those were his words."

"Jacques Bricheteau!" said Vautrin; "why, I know the man. There is a fellow of that name employed in one of the police departments."

"Well, then," said his aunt, "it is your nightingale's good fortune to be under the protection of the police!"

"No, I remember," said Vautrin. "This Jacques Bricheteau was an inspector of nuisances, who has just been dismissed for meddling in politics. Well, now, suppose you were to effect the introduction. It is late."

Jacqueline Collin had hardly left the room to go for Luigia, when there was a great commotion in the ante-room leading to it. Immediately after, the door was thrown open, and in spite of a desperate resistance on the part of the negro, who had been expressly ordered to admit nobody whatever, in came a personage whose advent was, to say the least, inopportune, if not altogether unexpected. In spite of an insolently aristocratic demeanor, the newcomer, caught in his violence by a stranger, was for a moment disconcerted, and Vautrin was malicious enough to intensify the situation by saying with Teutonic bluntness:

"Monsieur is an intimate friend of Madame de Saint-Estève's?"

"I have something of importance to say to her," replied the intruder, "and that servant is such an ass that he cannot tell you plainly whether his mistress is at home or out."

"I can bear witness that she is out," replied the supposed Count Halphertius. "For more than an hour I have wait for to see her, by her own appointment. She is a flighty thing, and I believe she is gone to the theatre, for what her nephew have sent her a ticket, the negro telled me."

"At whatever hour she may come in I must see her," said the newcomer, taking an easy-chair, into which he settled himself.

"For me, I wait no longer," replied Vautrin.

And, having bowed, he prepared to leave. Then Madame de Saint-Estève appeared on the scene. Warned by the negro, she had put on a bonnet and thrown a shawl over her shoulders, to appear as if she had just come in.

"Gracious!" she exclaimed, with well-feigned surprise. "Monsieur de Ronquerolles, here, at this hour!"

"Devil take you! what do you mean by shouting out my name?" said her customer in an undertone.

Vautrin, entering into the farce, turned back, and coming up with an obsequious bow—

"Monsieur le Marquis de Ronquerolles?" said he, "Peer of France, formerly her ambassador. I am glad to have spent

a minute with a statesman so well known—a so perfect diplomate!"

And with a respectful flourish he went to the door.

"What, Baron, going so soon?" said the old woman, trying to assume the tone and accent of a dowager of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

"Yes. Monsieur le Marquis has much to talk to you. I shall return back to-morrow at eleven—and be punctual."

"Very well; to-morrow at eleven," said his aunt. "But I may tell you everything is going on swimmingly; the lady thinks you will be all she could wish."

Another bow, and Vautrin was gone.

"Who in the world is that strange creature?" asked Ronquerolles.

"A Prussian Baron for whom I am finding a wife," replied the woman "Well," she went on, "is there anything new that you so pressingly want to speak to me?"

"Yes. And something which you ought to have known! The fair one left the sculptor's house this morning."

"Pooh!" said Jacqueline. "Who told you that?"

"My man, who has seen the maid-of-all-work."

"Hah!—Then you keep several irons hot!" said she, glad of an excuse for a quarrel.

"My good woman, you were making no way at all, and the matter has been in hand a month——"

"You seem to think that all you want is to be had ready-made, and that an Italian is the same soft tinder as your Paris sluts!—And then you are so liberal!"

"Why, you have extracted more than three banknotes for a thousand francs already for your sham expenses."

"A perfect fortune! And what about the engagement you undertook to arrange?"

"Can I open the Italian Opera expressly for that woman? If she would have sung at the French house——"

"There is Italian Opera in London though not in Paris for the moment, and the manager, as it happens, is over here in search of a prima."

"So I saw in the papers, of course; but what good could I do by trying to deal with a bankrupt?"

"Why, that is your best chance. You bolster up the man, and then, out of gratitude——"

"Oh, certainly!" said the Marquis, shrugging his shoulders. "A mere trifle of five hundred thousand francs—what *la Torpille* cost Nucingen!"

"My good man, you want the woman or you don't. Esther had tried the streets. This Italian is at least as handsome, *and* virtuous—green seal! Then she has a glorious voice. You have forked out three thousand-franc notes; what is that, pray, to make such a noise about?"

"Did you or did you not undertake the business?"

"I did. And I ought to have it left entirely to me; and if I had supposed that I was going to be checked off by your man-servant, I would have asked you to apply elsewhere. I do not care to have a partner in the game."

"But, you conceited old thing, but for that fellow, would you have known what I have just told you?"

"And did he tell you the rest of the story?"

"The rest of the story? What?" said the Marquis eagerly.

"Certainly. Who got the bird out of its nest, and in what cage it may be at this present speaking."

"Then you know?" cried Ronquerolles.

"If I do not know, I can make a guess."

"Then, tell me," said he, in great excitement.

"You, who know every queer specimen, old or young, in the Paris menagerie, must certainly have heard of Count Halphertius, a Swede—enormously rich, and just arrived."

"I never heard his name till this moment."

"You had better ask your servant; he can tell you."

"Come, come; do not try finessing. This Count Halphertius, you say——?"

"Is music-mad—and as woman-mad as Nucingen."

"And you think that la Luigia will have flown that way?"

"I know that he was hovering round her; he even charged me to make her splendid offers, and if I had not pledged myself to you——"

"Oh, I daresay; you are a dame of such lofty virtue!"

"Is that the way you take it?" said Jacqueline Collin, putting her hand in her pocket and pulling out a purse fairly well filled with notes. "You can take your money back, my boy, and I only beg you to trouble me no further."

"Get along, you wrong-headed creature," replied the Marquis, seeing three thousand-franc notes held out to him. "What I have given, you know I never take back."

"And I never keep what I have not earned.—You are done, Monsieur le Marquis. I am working for Count Halphertius; I brought away the lady; she is hidden here, in my rooms, and to-morrow morning she and the Swede set out for London, where a splendid engagement is waiting for her!"

"No, no, I do not believe that you would cheat me," said Ronquerolles, fancying that the fact thus fired at him point-blank was really the sarcasm it appeared. "We are old friends, you know; pocket those banknotes, and tell me honestly what you think of this rich foreigner as a rival."

"Well, I have told you. He is enormously rich; he will stick at no sacrifice; and I know that he has had several talks with Madame Nourrisson."

"Then you learned all those facts from that old carrion?"

"Madame Nourrisson is my friend," said Madame de Saint-Estève, with much dignity. "We may be competing to gain the same prize, but that is no reason for her being evil-spoken of in my presence."

"Did she tell you at least where this Count Halphertius is living?"

"No. But I know that he was to start for London yesterday. That is why I ran alongside before I put the flea in your ear."

"It is very evident the Italian woman is gone off to join him."

"You may very likely be right."

"A pretty mess you have made of it!" said Ronquerolles as he rose.

"Indeed!" said Jacqueline insolently. "And were you never checkmated in your diplomatic business?"

"Do you suppose you will get any more exact information?"

"We will see," said she. It was her formula for promising her assistance.

"But no underhand tricks," cried the Marquis. "You know I do not understand a joke."

"Will the case be brought before the Chamber of Peers?" said Madame de Saint-Estève, who was not a woman to be easily daunted.

Without answering this piece of insolence, Ronquerolles only remarked:

"You might perhaps desire your nephew to help in your inquiries."

"Yes," said Jacqueline; "I think it would not be amiss to tell him something about the matter—without naming you, of course."

"And if at any time I can be of use to him with his chief, you know, I am as staunch a friend as I am a dangerous foe."

Thereupon Madame de Saint-Estève and her client parted, and as soon as the enemy's coach-wheels were heard in the distance, the virtuous matron had no occasion to go in search of her nephew. He had gone round by a back passage, and come to wait in the room behind the drawing-room, whence he had overheard everything.

"You tricked him neatly!" said Vautrin. "We will contrive by little scraps of information to keep his head in the trough for a few days longer; but now go at once and fetch our 'Helen,' for unless it is too late you ought to introduce us."

"Be easy; I will settle that," said his aunt, who a minute later came back with the handsome housekeeper.

"Signora Luigia—Monsieur le Comte Halphertius," said she, introducing them to each other.

"Signora," said Vautrin in the most respectful tone, "my friend Madame de Saint-Estève tells me you will permit me to take some interest for your affairs——"

"Madame de Saint-Estève," replied Luigia, who had learned to speak French perfectly, "has spoken of you as a man with a great knowledge of art."

"That is to say, I am passionately devoted to it, and my fortune allows me to do all I can to encourage it. You, madame, have a splendid gift."

"That remains to be proved, if I am so fortunate as to get a chance of being heard."

"You may come out when you choose. I have seen the manager of the Italians theatre in London; he shall hear you to-morrow—it is settled."

"I am deeply grateful for the trouble you have been so good as to take; but before accepting your kind offices, I wish to come to a clear understanding."

"I love to be frank," said Vautrin.

"I am poor and alone in the world," said Luigia; "I am considered good-looking, and at any rate I am young. It behooves me, therefore, to be circumspect in accepting the eager benevolence that is shown me. In France, I am told, it is rarely disinterested."

"Disinterestedness," said Vautrin, "I shall promise. But as to hindering tongues of talking—I shall not promise."

"Oh! as for talk," said his aunt, "that you may make up your mind to. Monsieur le Comte's age even will not stop their wagging—for, in fact, a younger man is more likely to devote himself to a woman without any idea of—— In Paris your old bachelors are all reprobates!"

"I shall not have ideas," said Vautrin. "If I am so happy to be of use for the signora, which I admire her talent so much, she shall let me be her friend; but if I fail in my respect to her, she shall be independent for that talent, and she shall turn me out of her door like a servant that shall rob her."

"And I hear, Monsieur le Comte, that you have already been kind enough to inquire about an engagement for me?"

"It is almost settle," said Vautrin. "To-morrow you shall sing; and if your voice shall satisfy the manager of the Ital-

ians in London, it is fifty thousand francs for the rest of the season."

"It is a dream," said Luigia. "And, perhaps, when he shall have heard me——"

"He will be of the same opinion as that Monsieur Jacques Bricheteau," replied Jacqueline. "He said you had sixty thousand francs in your voice—so you are still robbed of ten thousand francs."

"Oh! as to his promise to pay fifty thousand francs as soon as he has heard you," said Vautrin, "I have no fear. Then to pay them—that is another thing. He wants money, they say. But we will have the agreement made by some clever man, Madame de Saint-Estève shall find him; and the signora shall not have to think about the money—that is her friends' concern. She shall think only of her parts."

Vautrin, as he said, "Then to pay them—that is another thing——" had managed to touch his aunt's foot with his own. She understood.

"On the contrary," said she, "I believe he will pay very punctually. He will not care to quarrel with us, my dear Count. It is not every day that you come across a man who, to secure an engagement, is ready to risk a sum of a hundred thousand crowns."

"What, monsieur! you are prepared to make such a sacrifice for my sake!—I can never allow it——"

"My good Madame de Saint-Estève," said Vautrin, "you are a tell-tale. I am risking nothing; I have looked into the matter, and at the end of the season I shall have my benefits; besides, I am v-e-ery rich, I am a widower, I have not children; and if part of that money shall be lost, I shall not for that hang myself."

"Nevertheless, monsieur, I will not permit such a piece of folly."

"Then you do not want me for your friend, and you are afraid you shall be compromised if I help you?"

"In Italy, monsieur, such a protector is quite recognized; and so long as there is nothing wrong, nobody cares for ap-

pearances; but I cannot entertain the idea of allowing you to risk so large a sum on my account."

"If it were a risk, no. But the risk is so small that your engagement and the hundred thousand crowns are two separate things, and I shall enter into partnership with the director even if you refuse."

"Come, come, pretty one," said Jacqueline, "you must make up your mind to owing this service to my friend Halphertius; you know that if I thought it was likely to carry you further than you think quite right, I should have nothing to do with it. Talk it over with your confessor, and you will see what he says about it."

"I would in Italy; but in France I should not consult him about a theatrical engagement."

"Well, then, signora," said Vautrin, in the kindest way, "consider your career as an artist. It lies before you, a splendid road! And when every paper in Europe is full of the *Diva Luigia,* there will be a good many people greatly vexed to think that they failed to recognize so great an artist, and to keep on friendly terms with her."

Vautrin knew men's minds too well not to have calculated the effect of this allusion to the secret sorrow of the Italian girl's heart. The poor woman's eyes flashed, and she gasped for breath.

"Monsieur le Comte," said she, "may I really trust you?"

"Undoubtedly; and all the more so, because if I spend the money, I expect to get some little return."

"And that is——?" said Luigia.

"That you show me some kind feeling; that the world shall believe me to be happier than I really shall be; and that you do nothing to deprive me of that little sop to my pride, with which I promise to be content."

"I do not quite understand," said the Italian, knitting her brows.

"And yet nothing can be plainer," said Madame de Saint-Estève. "My friend here does not wish to look a fool; and if while he is visibly your protector you were to take up with

your deputy again, or fall in love with somebody else, his part, as you may understand, would not be a handsome one."

"I shall never be anything to the Count but a grateful and sincere friend," said Luigia. "But I shall be no more for any other man—especially for the man of whom you speak. I did not break up my life, dear madame, without due consideration."

"But you see, my dear," said the old woman, thus showing a profound knowledge of the human heart, "that the men of whom we declare that we have washed our hands are often just the most dangerous."

"You speak as a Frenchwoman, madame," said the Italian.

"Then to-morrow," said Vautrin, "I have your permission to come for you and take you to meet this manager? Of course, you know many of the parts in stock opera?"

"I know all the parts taken by Malibran and Pasta," said Luigia, who had been studying indefatigably for two years past.

"And you will not change your mind in the course of the night?" said Vautrin insinuatingly.

"Here is my hand on it," said Luigia, with artless frankness. "I do not know whether bargains are ratified so in France."

"Ah, Diva, Diva!" cried Vautrin, with the most burlesque caricature of dilettante admiration; and he lightly touched the fair hand he held with his lips.

When we remember the terrible secret of this man's past life, it must be admitted that the Human Comedy—nay, I should say, Human Life—has some strange doublings.

The success of the singer's trial was far beyond Vautrin's expectations. The hearers were unanimously in favor of Luigia's engagement. Nay, if they had listened to Sir Francis Drake, it would have been signed then and there, and the singer would have set out the same day for London, where, owing to La Serboni's illness, Her Majesty's Theatre was in great straits.

But Vautrin, when once that side of the question was settled, wished to make further inquiries as to the money to be invested; and instead of Signora Luigia, it was he, attended by his secretary, who accompanied the *impresario* to England with a view to looking into matters. In the event of finding the position altogether untenable, he was quite prepared to withdraw his offer with cool faithlessness, as the *diva's* engagement no longer depended on the advance of capital which he had at first been prepared to risk.

As he was starting, he said to his aunt:

"To-day is the 17th of May; at seven in the evening on the 21st, I shall be back in Paris with Sir Francis Drake. Meanwhile, take care that our protégée is provided with a suitable outfit. No absurd magnificence, as if you were dressing up a courtesan, but handsome things in the best style, not loud or too startling to the signora's good taste. In short, just what you would buy for your daughter, if you had one, and she were going to be married.

"For that same day, the 21st, order a dinner for fifteen from Chevet. The party will consist of the leaders of the press; your client Bixiou will get them together. You, of course, as mistress of the house, but I entreat you, dress quietly—nothing to scare the guests. Then I must have a clever man of business to look through the papers before we sign, and a pianist to accompany the *Diva,* who shall sing us something after dinner. You must prepare her to give a taste of her best quality to all those trumpeters of fame. Sir Francis Drake and I make the party up to fifteen. I need not say that it is your friend Count Halphertius who gives the dinner at your house, because he has none of his own in Paris; and everything is to be of the best, elegant and refined, that it may be talked about everywhere."

After giving these instructions, Vautrin got into a post-chaise, knowing Jacqueline Collin well enough to feel sure that his orders would be carried out with intelligence and punctuality.

When Vautrin had mentioned Bixiou as the recruiting-sergeant of his company, this was what he had meant by calling him her "client."

Among the various secret sources of wealth that helped to swell the ever-increasing fortune which Rastignac had scented under Saint-Estève's social status, usury, of course, had not been disdained. Though economists have gone so far as to maintain that money is a form of merchandise of which the price is wrongfully fixed by law, for consciences as broad as those of Vautrin and his aunt the provisions of the penal code were an obstacle only in so far as they failed to elude them—but who is the fool who allows himself to be caught in the clutches of the code? Unless he has never read Molière's *Avare,* he cannot help being aware of the *Maître Simon,* who, from time immemorial, has stood as a screen between the extortionate money-lender's transactions and the vexations of the law.

Now, Master Bixiou, whose extremely free-and-easy life frequently compelled him to have recourse to his credit, had, through an intermediary, found himself in business relations with Jacqueline Collin; and by his monkey-skill in worming out mysteries, especially such as might interest himself, in spite of the queer disguises in which she involved herself, he had succeeded in getting face to face with his creditor. Then, one day, being quite unable to meet a bill which would fall due on the morrow, he had boldly attacked the ogress, to work the miracle of extracting a renewal on favorable terms. The woman liked a man of spirit, and, like all wild beasts, she had her intervals of ruth. It need hardly be said that Bixiou had done his utmost to propitiate her; he was witty under his reverses, full of dazzling paradox and theories of jovial immorality, which so effectually bewildered the money-lender, that not only did she renew the bill, but she had even lent him a further sum; and this sum, to crown the marvel, he had actually repaid her.

Hence, between the artist and the "matrimonial agent" there arose a certain friendly feeling. Bixiou, not knowing

what the terrible creature was with whom he rubbed shoulders, flattered himself that it was his cleverness that made her laugh, and now and then, when he was at his wits' end, enabled him to soften her to the extent of a few napoleons; he did not know that he was the dog of the raree show in the lion's den; and that this woman, in whose past life there had been incidents *à la* Brinvilliers, was not incapable of making him pay with his life for his insolent familiarity, to say nothing of the interest on her loans.

Meanwhile, and pending this fatal termination, which was not very probable, Jacqueline Collin did not hesitate to employ this jovial gossip in the ferreting he practised so successfully; indeed, she not unfrequently gave him, without his knowing it, a part to play in the shady imbroglios that were the occupation of her life.

In the affair of Luigia, the caricaturist was wonderfully useful; through him she could insure publicity for the rumor of Count Halphertius' appearance on the Parisian horizon, his passion for the singer, and the immense sums he was prepared to put down in her behalf. And it must be said that his universal acquaintance with the writing, singing, painting, eating, rollicking, swarming world of Paris, made him capable above other men of recruiting the full complement of celebrity-makers that Vautrin required.

On the 21st, at seven o'clock precisely, all the guests, of whom Desroches had given Bixiou the list, and Desroches himself, were assembled in the drawing-room in the Rue de Provence when the negro announced Sir Francis Drake and Count Halphertius, who had insisted on not being named first. The Swedish gentleman's dress was admirably correct: a black suit, white waistcoat, and white tie, over which the ribbon of a fancy order hung round his neck. His other decorations were fastened at his button-hole by little chains, but he had not dared to flaunt a star sewn to his coat.

As he glanced at the assembled circle, Vautrin was annoyed to perceive that his aunt's habits and instincts had

proved stronger than his special and express injunctions, and a sort of turban, green and yellow, would have put him seriously out of temper, but that the skill she had shown in carrying out all his other wishes won forgiveness for her head-dress. As for Luigia, dressed, as usual, in black, having had the wisdom to refuse the assistance of a hairdresser who had vainly attempted to reduce what he called the disorder of her hair, she was supremely beautiful; and an air of melancholy gravity stamped on all her person compelled a feeling of respect, which surprised these men, to whom Bixiou had spoken of her as awaiting their verdict.

The only person who was specially introduced to Vautrin was Desroches, whom Bixiou brought up to him with this jovially emphatic formula:

"Maître Desroches, the most intelligent attorney of modern times."

As to Sir Francis Drake, if he seemed a shade less scornful than he had intended to be of the influence of journalism as affecting the supply of capital, it was because he happened to be acquainted with Félicien Vernou and Lousteau, two writers for the journalistic press, with whom he shook hands warmly.

Before dinner was announced, Count Halphertius thought it his part to make a little speech; and after a few minutes' conversation with Signora Luigia, to whom he had good taste enough not to speak till he had been in the room a short while, he ostensibly addressed Madame de Saint-Estève, but loud enough to be heard by all who were present.

"My dear madame," said he to his aunt, "you are really a wonderful woman. The first time I find myself in a Paris drawing-room, and you make me to meet all that is most distinguished in literature, in arts, and in the world of business. I, what am only a northern barbarian, though my country has its famous men—Linnæus, Berzelius, the great Thorvaldsen, Tegner, Franzen, Geier, and our charming novelist, Frédérica Bremer—I am here astonished and timid, and I

do not know how to say to you that I am so extraordinary obliged."

"Well, through Bernadotte," said the lady, whose erudition took her so far as that, "France and Sweden clasped hands."

"It is quite certain," said Vautrin, "that our beloved sovereign Charles XIV.——"

He was interrupted by a butler, who threw open the doors and announced dinner.

Madame de Saint-Estève took Vautrin's arm, and whispered as they went:

"Don't you think it all very well done?"

"Yes," said Jacques Collin, "it is very well got up. Nothing is wrong but your diabolical parrot-colored turban, which startled me a good deal."

"No, no," said Jacqueline, "with my Javanese phiz" (she was born, in fact, in Java) "something Oriental carries it off."

She placed Sir Francis Drake to her right, and next to him Desroches; Vautrin, opposite to her at the other end of the table, was supported by Émile Blondet of the *Débats* and Luigia, next to whom sat Théodore Gaillard; the twenty-five thousand subscribers to the paper edited by this practised craftsman well earned him this distinction. The other guests seated themselves as they pleased.

The dinner was not, on the whole, particularly lively. The "Human Comedy" has more than once had occasion to include a picture of the cheerful race who were here present in force, under the brilliant light of the *triclinium;* but then they had not been muzzled as they were at this banquet. Bixiou, as a message from Madame de Saint-Estève, had particularly impressed on all the guests that they were to say nothing that could distress the chaste ears of the pious Italian. So these men, forced to be cautions, all men of wit and feeling—more or less, as a famous critic said, had lost their spirit; and falling back on the dinner, which was excellent, they murmured in undertones, or reduced the conver-

sation to commonplace remarks. In short, they ate and they drank under protest, so to speak; but they did not really dine.

Bixiou, to whom such a state of things was quite unendurable, was bent on making some break in this monotony. The intimacy between a foreign nobleman and their hostess had given him food for thought; he had also been struck by a certain inefficiency in the Amphitryon; and had said to himself that a genuine nobleman would at a smaller cost have succeeded in putting some life into the party. So, in order to feel his way, it occurred to him to test the Count by speaking of Sweden, and at the beginning of the second course he asked him all across the table:

"Monsieur le Comte, you are too young, I imagine, to have known Gustavus III., whom Scribe and Auber have set in an opera, and who in France has given his glorious name to a *galop*."

"I beg your pardon," replied Vautrin, seizing the opportunity thus offered to him; "I am very nearly sixty, which would make me thirteen in 1792, when our beloved sovereign was killed by the assassin Anckastroem; so I can remember those times."

Having said this, by the help of a volume called *Caractères et Anecdotes de la cour de Suède* (published by Arthus Bertrand in 1808 without the author's name), which he had picked up at a bookstall since his incarnation as a Swede, Vautrin was in a position to defy pitfalls. He improved the occasion; like a speaker who only waits to be started on a familiar text to display his powers to the best advantage, no sooner was the tap turned on than he flowed with such erudition and pertinence on all the great men of his country, gave so many circumstantial details, related so many curious and secret facts, especially with regard to the famous *Coup d'État,* by which Gustavus III. emancipated the Crown in 1772; in short, was so precise and so interesting, that as they rose from table, Émile Blondet said to Bixiou:

"I was like you—a foreign Count, introduced by this

matchmonger, at first struck me as suspicious. But not only was the dinner really princely; this man knows his Swedish Court in a way that is not to be got out of books. He is undoubtedly a man of good family; and if only I had time, I could make a very interesting pamphlet out of all he has told us."

When they had had coffee, Sir Francis Drake, Vautrin, and Desroches went into an adjoining room, where they talked over the deed of partnership and the engagement of the prima donna. All the terms being finally settled, Vautrin called in the *Diva* to sign.

"He is a very cunning fox," said Desroches to Bixiou as they came back to the drawing-room. "He must be enormously rich; he paid the Englishman a hundred thousand crowns down in banknotes on the spot; and when I wanted to insert a rather stringent clause in the agreement as to the payment of the lady's salary—for Sir Francis Drake has not a reputation for paying *on the tail,* as Léon de Lora would say—our gentleman would allow no written expression of distrust—whence I conclude that the fair Italian keeps him at arm's length, and that he is not sorry to have some hold over her through arrears of pay."

"And your fees," said Bixiou. "Did he happen to mention them? I told old Saint-Estève that she must not expect a man of your consequence to put himself out of the way for soup and beef—that they must be garnished with parsley."

"Here you are!" said Desroches, taking out of his pocket a gold box, oval in shape, and very handsomely chased. "Just now, while I was reading the indentures, I had laid my snuff-box of Irish horn—worth about ten francs perhaps—on the table by my side. Our friend interrupted me to ask me for a pinch. When I had done reading and wanted it, in the place of my box, which had vanished, I found this gem."

"Your 'uncle,'" said Bixiou, "would lend you three or four hundred francs on it, which would mean a value of about a thousand."

"As I protested against such an exchange," Desroches went

on, "'I am the gainer by it,' says he. 'I have a relic of the Napoleon of attorneys.'"

"Mighty genteel!" said Bixiou, "and please God and the old woman I will cultivate his acquaintance.—I say, supposing I were to sketch him in an early number of the *Charivari?*"

"First we must find out whether he has enough French wit in him to be pleased to see himself caricatured."

At this moment a chord on the piano announced that the Signora Luigia was about to face the enemy. She sang the "Willow Song" with a depth of expression which touched her audience, though the trial was held by an areopagus who was digesting a dinner of no sparing character. Émile Blondet, a dogmatic politician rather than a man of imagination, was surprised into beating time in the fervor of his enthusiasm. He beat out of time, it is true, but the emotion was not the less evident.

The song ended, Vernou and Lousteau, going up to Sir Francis Drake, said, with an assumption of indignation as flattering to his skill as to his hopes as a manager:

"What a mean wretch you must be to have secured such an artist for fifty thousand francs—a mere song!"

Luigia then sang an air from *Nina,* by Paesiello, and in this light and vivacious character revealed a gift of impersonation at least equal to her talents as a singer.

"She startled me!" said the old aunt to Vautrin. "I fancied I saw Peyrade's daughter."

This was an allusion to a dreadful incident connected with Baron Nucingen's story, in which this formidable foe had played the chief part. She had driven an unhappy girl out of her mind by getting her into a house of ill-fame, in pursuance of an atrocious scheme of vengeance.

What crowned Luigia's success, and recommended her especially to her reporters, was her modesty—a sort of ignorance of her wonderful gifts in the midst of the praises that were showered on her. This little crowd of journalists, accustomed to the extravagant vanity and insolent assumption

of the smallest stage queens, could not get over the humility and artlessness of this Empress of Song, who seemed quite surprised at the effect she had produced.

A few words skilfully whispered at parting to each of these great men, and a card left at their lodgings next day by Count Halphertius, secured for his protégée, at any rate for the moment, a chorus of admiration which would echo across the Channel, and be almost as good as a brilliant *début* at the Italian opera house in Paris.

The signora's departure was fixed for the morrow; she was to travel, escorted by Sir Francis Drake. To avoid a *tête-à-tête,* Madame de Saint-Estève had taken the precaution of engaging a maid, and, against her practice when she meddled with servants, she took care to secure an honest woman.

Count Halphertius gave proof of his disinterestedness in a way that was thoroughly appreciated. He said, which was perfectly true, that business detained him in Paris, reserving the right, if he should be so fortunate as to bring it to a conclusion in about a month or six weeks, to run over to London and enjoy the triumph, of which he no longer felt a doubt, and which he was so happy as to have been able to prepare.

Some days before Luigia's journey, the Boulogne boat carried another person of this drama to England.

As soon as he had ascertained where he could find Sallenauve, to give him the information he thought so urgent, Jacques Bricheteau abandoned the idea of writing to him. He thought it simpler and safer to go to see him.

On reaching London, the traveler was somewhat surprised to learn that Hanwell was one of the most famous lunatic asylums in the three kingdoms. If he had but remembered the apprehensions his friend had felt at the state of Marie-Gaston's brain, he would have guessed the truth; but he was quite at sea when he was further informed that this asylum, maintained by the rates, was open only to mad people of

the lower classes, and not to paying patients. However, Jacques Bricheteau was not so foolish as to waste time in vain conjectures. We have already seen that he was prompt and determined; and he now set off without delay to Hanwell, and as the place is only about nine miles from London, he was soon there.

Hanwell is a large building of not unhandsome appearance; the front, nine hundred and ninety-six feet in length, is broken by three octagonal towers, three stories high—one at each end, and one in the middle; the monotony is thus relieved, though the melancholy purpose of the building necessitated a very moderate use of ornament.

The asylum is pleasantly situated at the foot of a hill on the borders of Jersey (*sic*)* and Middlesex. The extensive, grounds, gardens, and farms lie between the Uxbridge road, the river Brent, and the Grand Junction Canal; nine hundred patients can be accommodated and treated there. As it is well known that manual labor is one of the most valuable elements of the cure, the house contains workshops for carpentry, smiths' work, painting, glazing, and brushmaking; cotton is spun, shoes, baskets, strawberry pottles, and straw hats are made, and other light work for women. The finer qualities of work are sold to visitors in a bazaar, and bring in a considerable profit.

Such patients as are incapable of learning a trade work in the garden and farm, which supply many of the wants of the establishment; bread and beer are made on the premises; all the necessary linen is made up and washed by means of a steam engine, which also heats every part of the building. A chapel with a fine organ, a library, and a concert-room—the salutary effect of music on the patients being amply proved—show that, hand in hand with intelligent care given to physical suffering, the needs of the spiritual and intellectual man are not neglected.

Finally, as Lord Lewin had told Sallenauve in his letter, the superintendent and director was Dr. Ellis, a distinguished

* This curious mistake seems to have arisen from the proximity of Osterley Park, Lord Jersey's residence.

physician to whom we owe a valuable treatise on the development and therapeutics of mental disease. In his treatment of these maladies this learned man does not despise the aid of phrenology.

On being shown into the doctor's room, the organist asked him whether a Frenchman named Sallenauve were not staying for a time at Hanwell. Here, again, Bricheteau paid the penalty of his neglected and shabby appearance; without vouchsafing any inquiries or explanations, Dr. Ellis shortly replied that he had never even heard Monsieur de Sallenauve's name. This, after all, was very probable; so Jacques Bricheteau withdrew, much disappointed; and fancying that Madame de l'Estorade had misread, or he himself had mistaken, the name of Hanwell, he spent some days in running about the county of Middlesex visiting every spot of which the name ending in *ell* invited his attention.

All his inquiries having ended in nothing, as he rarely allowed his persevering and resourceful spirit to be beaten in anything he undertook, Jacques Bricheteau resolved to make another attempt on Hanwell by letter, thinking, very rightly, that a letter sometimes got in where a man was barred out. In point of fact, on the evening of the day when he posted his letter he received a reply from Sallenauve, inviting him to call at the asylum, where he was promised a cordial welcome.

Dr. Ellis' conduct was accounted for when Jacques Bricheteau learned the extent of the disaster that had befallen Marie-Gaston. Discretion is, of course, one of the most indispensable virtues in the Head of an asylum for the insane; since every day, by his position, he becomes the depositary of secrets which affect the honor of whole families. To admit that the nearest friend of Marie-Gaston—whose deep melancholy was known to all—was then staying at Hanwell, would have been to put the inquirer, whoever he might be, in possession of the fact of his insanity, and thus the secret they had agreed to keep as to his state, which they still liked to believe would be temporary and curable, would have inevitably become known.

When Bricheteau arrived at the asylum, and was introduced by Sallenauve as his friend, he was heartily welcomed. Dr. Ellis made every apology; and having on various occasions in the course of his practice found really wonderful benefit derived from music, he said that he regarded the organist's arrival as quite a godsend, since his great talent might be of immense use as a means towards curing the patient.

Since leaving Ville-d'Avray, Marie-Gaston's state had unfortunately become seriously complicated. Until he reached England he had been comparatively cheerful and docile to Lord Lewin's advice; they might have been supposed to be friends traveling together for pleasure. But when, instead of embarking at once for South America, Lord Lewin, under the pretext of business to transact in the neighborhood of London, proposed to Marie-Gaston to accompany him, the madman began to suspect some snare into which he had been wheedled. He allowed himself, nevertheless, to be driven to Hanwell, represented by Lord Lewin as one of the royal residences; he had not even resisted when invited to cross the threshold of his prison; but once in the presence of Dr. Ellis, who had been forewarned by a letter from Lord Lewin, a sort of instinct, of which the insane are very capable, seemed to tell the unhappy man that his freedom was in danger.

"I do not like that man's face," he said aloud to Lord Lewin. "Let us go."

The doctor had tried to laugh off the remark; but Marie-Gaston, getting more and more excited, exclaimed:

"Hold your tongue! Your laughter is intolerable. You look just like an executioner."

And it is possible that the deep attention with which mad doctors must study the countenance of a patient, added to the stern fixed gaze by which they are often compelled to control a maniac, may at last give their features an expression of inquisitorial scrutiny. This, no doubt, has a highly irritating effect on the overstrung nervous sensibilities of the unhappy creatures brought within their ken.

"You will not deprive me, I hope," said the doctor, "of the pleasure of keeping you and my friend Lord Lewin to dinner?"

"I! Dine with you?" cried Marie-Gaston vehemently. "What—that you may poison me!"

"Well, but poison is just what you want, surely?" said Lord Lewin quickly. "Were you not talking the other day of a dose of prussic acid?"

Lord Lewin was not, as might perhaps be supposed, merely rash in making this pointed speech; he had studied mad persons, and he discerned that a deeply hostile aversion for the doctor was seething in Marie-Gaston's mind; so, being strong and active, he intended to divert on himself the storm that was about to burst. It fell out as he had expected.

"Vile scoundrel!" cried Marie-Gaston, seizing him by the throat, "you are in collusion with the other, and selling my secrets!"

It was with some difficulty, and the help of two warders; that Lord Lewin had shaken off his desperate clutch; the poor man had developed raving mania.

The paroxysm, after lasting some days, had yielded to care and treatment; the patient was now gentle and quiet, and showed some hopeful symptoms; but Sir William Ellis hoped to induce a final crisis, and he was considering the way and means to this end when Jacques Bricheteau arrived.

As soon as Sallenauve found himself alone with the organist, he questioned him as to the motives that had prompted him to follow him, and it was not without indignation that he heard of the intrigue which Maxime and the Beauvisages seemed to be plotting against him. His old suspicions revived:

"Are you quite certain," he asked, "that the man I but just saw was in fact the Marquis de Sallenauve?"

"Mother Marie des Anges and Achille Pigoult," replied Bricheteau, "who warned me of this plot, have no more doubt of the Marquis' identity than I have. And in all the gossip which they are trying to work up into a scandal, one thing

alone seems to me at all serious, and that is, that by your absence you leave the field free to your enemies."

"But the Chamber will not condemn me unheard," replied the member. "I wrote to the President to ask leave of absence; and in the event of its being refused, which is most improbable, I have asked l'Estorade, who knows my reasons for being here, to answer for me."

"You also wrote to madame his wife?"

"I wrote only to his wife," replied Sallenauve. "I announced to her the misfortune that has overtaken our friend, and at the same time begged her to explain to her husband the good offices I requested of him."

"If that is the case," said Jacques Bricheteau, "do not depend for anything on the l'Estorades. A rumor of the blow about to be dealt you had no doubt already reached them."

And after telling him of the reception he had met with, as well as the unkind speeches made by Madame de l'Estorade, Jacques Bricheteau drew the conclusion that in the impending struggle no help could be hoped for from that quarter.

"I have some right to be surprised at such a state of things," said Sallenauve, "after Madame de l'Estorade's pressing assurances of unfailing goodwill; however," he added with a shrug, "nothing is impossible, and calumny has ere now undermined closer friendship."

"So now, as you must understand," said the organist, "we must set out for Paris without delay: all things considered, your presence here is really far less necessary."

"On the contrary," replied Sallenauve, "only this morning the doctor was congratulating himself on my having decided on coming, saying that at the right moment my intervention might be invaluable. In fact, I have not yet been allowed to see Marie-Gaston, reserving my appearance as a surprise at need."

"The usefulness of your presence," replied Jacques Bricheteau, "is nevertheless problematical; while, by remaining here

for an indefinite period, you are most certainly imperiling your political future, your social position, everything of which the most ardent friendship has no right to demand the sacrifice."

"We will go and talk it over with the doctor," said Sallenauve at length, for he could not fail to see that Jacques Bricheteau's importunity was justified.

On being asked whether Marie-Gaston's stay in the asylum was liable to be prolonged:

"Yes, I think so," said the doctor; "I have just seen our patient, and the cerebral irritation, which must give way to the material action of medicines before we can attempt to bring any moral influence to bear, seems to me most unfortunately on the highway to a fresh outbreak."

"Still," said Sallenauve anxiously, "you have not lost all hope of a cure?"

"Far from it; I believe firmly in a favorable termination. But these dreadful disorders often present frequent alternations of aggravation and improvement; and I am beginning to foresee that the case will be a longer one than I had at first hoped."

"I have but just been elected a member of the Lower Chamber," said Sallenauve, "and the opening of the session demands my return to Paris. It is no less required by urgent private matters which Monsieur Bricheteau came expressly to discuss. So unless I thought that my presence here would be immediately needed——"

"Go," said the doctor; "it may be a very long business. If the patient's condition had not shown a relapse, I had intended to arrange some startling scene with your help and that of Monsieur Bricheteau's music, aided too by a young lady, a relation of my wife's, who on various occasions has seconded me very intelligently—a little dramatic shock from which I hoped for good results. But, in the first place, my young relation is absent, and for the moment nothing can be done but by medical agents. So, for the moment, go! The patient is a man in whom it is impossible not to take a

great interest; you may leave him in perfect confidence to me and Lord Lewin. I will even go so far as to say that I shall pride myself on achieving the cure, and I know no better warrant to offer you than this from a doctor's lips."

Sallenauve gratefully pressed the doctor's hand, seeing his eager wish to reassure him. He then took leave of Mrs. Ellis, who promised no less warmly than her husband the devoted care of a mother's watchfulness. As to Lord Lewin, Sallenauve's character had won his most friendly esteem, and his conduct in the past was a guarantee for all that might be expected of him now and in the future. So Bricheteau had no difficulty about getting off without any further delay.

They reached London at about five in the afternoon, and would have gone on to Paris the same evening but for a surprise which awaited them. Their eyes fell immediately on enormous posters, on a scale which only English "puff" can achieve, announcing at the corner of every street the appearance that same evening of SIGNORA LUIGIA at Her Majesty's Theatre. The name alone was enough to arrest the travelers' attention; but the papers to which they had recourse for information, supplied them, in the English fashion, with so many circumstantial facts as to the débutant's career, that Sallenauve could not doubt the transformation of his late housekeeper into one of the brightest stars that had risen for a long time above the horizon of England. If he had listened to Jacques Bricheteau, he would have been content to hail from afar the triumph of the handsome Italian, and have gone on his way. But having calculated that one evening spent in London would make no serious delay in his arrival, Sallenauve was bent on judging for himself, by his own eyes and ears, what the enthusiasm was worth which was expressed on all sides for the new prima donna.

Sallenauve went off at once to the box office, which he found closed, but he was enabled to perceive that the singer's success was immense. Every seat had been sold by two in the afternoon, and he thought himself lucky to secure two stalls at a private ticket office for the sum of five pounds.

The London opera-house had never perhaps held a more brilliant assembly; and it is impossible not to be struck by the capricious vicissitudes of human life, when we reflect that all this concourse of the English aristocracy was brought about originally by the ambition of a man who had been a felon on the hulks, to rise, as a member of the police, to a rather better rank in its hierarchy.

By a no less singular coincidence the piece announced was Paesiello's *Nina, o la Pazza per Amore* (mad for love), from which Luigia had sung an air after the dinner given by Madame de Saint-Estève.

When the curtain rose, Sallenauve, having spent nearly a week at Hanwell in the midst of mad people, could all the better appreciate the prodigious gifts as an actress displayed by his former housekeeper in the part of *Nina;* and in the face of her heartrending imitation, he went through a renewal of all the distress of mind he had just gone through while watching the dreadful reality of Marie-Gaston's insanity.

Bricheteau, in spite of his annoyance at first at Sallenauve's dawdling, as he called it, finally fell under the spell of the singer's power; and at last, seeing the whole house frantic with enthusiasm, and the stage strewn with bouquets, he said:

"On my word, I can wish you nothing better than a success in any degree like this on another stage!" and then he rashly added, "But there are no such triumphs in politics! Art alone is great——"

"And la Luigia is its prophet!" replied Sallenauve, smiling through the tears that admiration had brought to his eyes.

On coming out of the theatre, Bricheteau looked at his watch; it was a quarter to eleven, and by making great haste there was still time to get on board the packet starting at eleven. But when the organist looked round to urge this on Sallenauve, who was to follow him through the crowd, he no longer saw his man: the Député had vanished.

A quarter of an hour later Luigia's dresser came into a room where her mistress was receiving the compliments of the greatest names in England, introduced to her by Sir Francis Drake. She gave the signora a card. The prima donna as she read it changed color, and whispered a few words to the maid. And she then showed such obvious anxiety to be rid of her throng of admirers, that some budding adorers could not help betraying their surprise.

However, an artist who is the rage has many privileges; and the fatigue of a part into which the *Diva* had thrown her whole soul was so good an excuse for her want of cordiality, that her court dispersed without too much demur. Nay, her curtness, regarded as a whim, was taken as a very original proceeding, and recommended her to some incipient fancies.

As soon as she was alone, she hastily resumed her ordinary dress; the manager's carriage had soon conveyed her to the hotel where she had been living since her arrival; and on entering her sitting-room, she found Sallenauve, who had got there before her.

"You here, monsieur!" said she. "It is a dream!"

"Especially to me," replied Sallenauve, "since I find you in London after having sought you in vain in Paris."

"You took so much trouble—but why?"

"You left us in so strange a manner, your moods are so hasty, you knew so little of Paris, and so many dangers might await your inexperience, that I feared everything for you."

"What harm could come to me?" said she. "And I was neither your wife, nor your sister, nor your mistress; I was only your——"

"I had believed," Sallenauve eagerly put in, "that you were my friend."

"I was your debtor," said Luigia. "I saw that I was a trouble to you in your new position. Could I do otherwise than relieve you of my presence?"

"Pray, who had impressed you with that intolerable con-

viction? Had I said or hinted anything to that effect? Was it impossible to discuss a plan of life for you without so far offending your susceptibilities?"

"I feel what I feel," said the Italian. "I myself was conscious that you wished me anywhere rather than in your house. You had afforded me the means of having no fears for the future; indeed, as you see, it promises to be anything rather than alarming."

"On the contrary, it promises to be so brilliant that but for the fear of seeming too presuming, I should make so bold to ask from whose hand, happier than mine, you have obtained such prompt and efficient help."

"A great Swedish nobleman," replied Luigia without hesitation, "who spends part of an immense fortune in the encouragement of art, procured me this engagement at Her Majesty's; the kind indulgence of the public did the rest."

"Your talent, you should say. I heard you this evening."

"And were you pleased with your humble servant?" said the singer, with a coquettish courtesy.

"Your musical achievements did not surprise me; I knew your gifts already, and an infallible judge had answered for them; but your flights of dramatic passion, your acting, at once so strong and so sure of itself—that indeed amazed me."

"I have suffered much," said the Italian, "and grief is a great master."

"Suffered!" said Sallenauve; "in Italy, yes. But since you came to France, I like to flatter myself——"

"Everywhere," said Luigia in a broken voice. "I was not born under a happy star."

"That 'Everywhere' has to me a touch of reproach. It is late, indeed, to be telling me of any wrong I may have done you."

"You have not done me the smallest wrong. The mischief was there!" said Luigia, laying her hand on her heart. "I alone was in fault."

"From some fancy, I dare say, as foolish as your notion

that it was a point of honor that you should quit my house?"

"Oh, I was not dreaming then," said the Italian. "How well I knew what lay at the bottom of your mind! If it were only in return for all you had done for me, I ought to long for your esteem, and yet I was forbidden even to aspire to it."

"But, my dear Luigia, there is no word for such ideas. Did I ever fail in consideration and respect? And besides, has not your conduct always been exemplary?"

"Yes. I have tried never to do anything that could make you think ill of me. But I was Benedetto's widow, all the same."

"What! Do you fancy that that disaster, the outcome of just revenge——"

"Nay. It was not the man's death that could lower me in your eyes; quite the contrary. But I had been the wife of a buffoon, of a police spy, of a wretch always ready to sell me to any buyer——"

"While you were in that position, I felt that you were to be pitied; but scorned? Never!"

"Well," said the Italian, "we had lived together, alone, under the same roof, for nearly two years."

"Certainly; and to me it had become a delightful habit."

"Did you think me ugly?"

"You know I did not, since I took you for the model of my best statue."

"A fool?"

"A woman cannot be a fool who puts so much soul into a part."

"Well then; it is evident that you despised me!"

Sallenauve was utterly amazed at this prompt logic; he thought himself clever to reply:

"It seems to me that if I had behaved differently, I should have given greater proof of contempt."

But he had to deal with a woman who in all things—in her friendships and aversions, in act as well as in word—went straight to the mark.

She went on as if she were afraid that he had not understood her.

"At this day, monsieur, I can say everything, for I am talking of the past, and the future is no longer in my hands. Since the day when you were kind to me, and when by your generous protection I was rescued from an outrageous insult, my heart has been wholly yours."

Sallenauve, who had never suspected the existence of this feeling, and who, above all, could not conceive of its avowal, made with such artless crudity, did not know what to say.

"I was well aware," the strange creature went on, "that I should have much to do to raise myself from the base condition in which you had seen me at our first meeting. If even at the moment when you consented to take me with you I had seen any signs of gallantry in your behavior, any hint that you might take advantage of the dangerous position in which I had placed myself by my own act, my heart would have shrunk into itself, you would have been but an ordinary man, and to rehabilitate me after Benedetto it was not enough——"

"And so," said Sallenauve, "to love you would have been an insult, and not to love was cruelty. What a woman! How is it possible to avoid offending you?"

"I did not want you to love me when you did not know me," said the singer, "when I had scarcely shaken off the mire, for then it would have been only the love of the eye and of the taste, which it is never wise to trust. But when, after living in your house for two years, you could know by my conduct that I was worthy of your esteem; when, without ever craving a single pleasure, and devoted to the care of your house, with no relaxation but the study which was to raise me to the dignity of an artist like yourself, I could, merely for the happiness of seeing you create a masterpiece, sacrifice the womanly modesty which on another occasion you had seen me defend with vehemence—then you were cruel not to understand; and your imagination can never, never picture what I have suffered, or how many tears I have shed!"

"But, my dear Luigia, you were my guest; even if I could have suspected what you now reveal to me, my duty as a man of honor required me to see nothing, understand nothing, but on the plainest evidence."

"And was not my perpetual melancholy proof enough? If my heart had been free, should I not have been less reserved and more familiar? No—the case is plain enough: you could see nothing; your fancy was fixed elsewhere."

"Well, and if it were?"

"It ought not to have been," said the Italian stringently. "That woman was not free; she had a husband and children; and, though you chose to make a saint of her, even if I had no advantage over her excepting in youth—though that is, of course, quite absurd—it seems to me that she was not to compare with me."

Sallenauve could not help smiling. However, he replied quite gravely:

"You are altogether mistaken as to your rival. Madame de l'Estorade has never been anything to me but a head to study, and even so, of no interest whatever but for her likeness to another woman. That woman I knew at Rome before I ever saw you. She had beauty, youth, and a great talent for Art. At this day she is captive in a convent; so, like you, she has paid tribute to sorrow; as you see, all your perfections——"

"What! Three love stories, and all ending in air!" said Luigia. "You were born under a strange star indeed! Of course when I was so misunderstood, it was only because I was under its maleficent influence, and in that case you must be forgiven."

"Then, since you admit me to mercy, pray allow me to return to my former question. The future, you tell me, is no longer in your hands; the astounding frankness of your avowals leads me to infer that, to give you such boldness, a very solid barrier must have been raised between you and me. Then what is the power by which, at one leap, you have sprung so high? Have you made a bargain with the devil?"

"Perhaps so," said Luigia, laughing.

"Do not laugh," said Sallenauve. "You chose to face the hell of Paris alone; it would not at all surprise me to hear that you met with some dangerous acquaintance at starting. I know the difficulties that the greatest artists have to surmount before they can get a hearing. Do you know who the foreign gentleman is who has leveled every road before you?"

"I know that he has put down a fabulous sum to secure my engagement; that I am to be paid fifty thousand francs; and that he did not even accompany me to London."

"Then all this devotion is free, gratis?"

"Not at all. My patron has reached the age at which a man no longer loves, but has a great deal of conceit. So his protection is to be widely proclaimed, and I have pledged myself to do nothing, say nothing, that may give the lie to his fictitious happiness. To you alone did I owe the truth; but I know you to be trustworthy, and I entreat you to keep it absolutely secret."

"And it does not seem improbable to you that this state of things should last?—But how and where did you make acquaintance with this man whom you think you can for ever feed on air?"

"Through a *Dame de Charité* who came to see me while you were away. She had been struck by my voice at Saint-Sulpice during the services of the month of Mary, and she wanted to bribe me away to sing at her parish church, Notre-Dame de Lorette."

"What was the lady's name?"

"Madame de Saint-Estève."

Though he did not know all the depths of Jacqueline Collin's existence, Sallenauve had heard of Madame de Saint-Estève as a money-lender and go-between; he had heard Bixiou speak of her.

"That woman," said he, "has a notoriously bad reputation in Paris. She is an agent of the lowest intrigues."

"So I suspected," said Luigia, "but what does that matter to me?"

"If the man she has introduced to you——"

"Were such another as herself?" interrupted the singer. "But that is not likely. The hundred thousand crowns he has placed in the manager's hands have floated the theatre again."

"He may be rich and yet be scheming against you. The two are not incompatible."

"He may have schemes against me," said Luigia, "but they will not be carried out. Between them and me—*I* stand."

"But your reputation?"

"That I lost when I left your house. I was generally supposed to be your mistress; you had to give your own explanation to your constituency; and you contradicted the report, but do you imagine that you killed it?"

"And my esteem, on which you set such value?"

"I no longer need it. You did not love me when I wanted it; you will not love me when I no longer care."

"Who can tell?" said Sallenauve.

"There are two reasons against it," replied the Italian. "In the first place, it is too late; and in the second, we no longer tread the same road."

"What do you mean?"

"I am an artist, you have ceased to be one. I am rising, you are going down."

"You call it going down to rise perhaps to the highest dignities of State?"

"Whether you rise or no," cried Luigia ecstatically, "you will be beneath your past self and the splendid future that lay before you. Indeed, I believe I have deceived you; I believe if you had still been a sculptor, I should yet for some time have endured your coldness and disdain; at any rate, I should have waited till after my first trials in my art, hoping that the halo which lends glory to a woman on the stage might at last perhaps have made you aware of my existence—there—at your side. But from the day of your apostasy, I could no longer persist in my humiliating sacrifice. There is no future in common for us."

"What!" said Sallenauve, holding out his hand, which Luigia did not take, "are we not even to remain friends?"

"A friend—a man friend—you have already. No, it is all over and done with. We shall hear of each other; and from afar as we cross in life we shall wave each other a greeting, but nothing more."

"And this is how all is to end between you and me!" said Sallenauve sadly.

The singer looked at him for a moment, and tears sparkled in her eyes.

"Listen," said she, in a sincere and resolute tone, "this much is possible. I have loved you, and after you no man will find a place in the heart you scorned. You will be told that I have lovers: the old man whom I am pledged to own to, and others after him perhaps; but you will not believe it, remembering the woman that I am. And, who knows? By and by your life may be swept clear of the other affections which barred the way for mine, and the freedom, the eccentricity of the avowal I have just made will perhaps remain stamped on your memory—then it is not altogether impossible that after such long wandering you may at last want me. If that should happen—if, as the result of bitter disappointments, you should be brought back to the belief in Art—well, then, if time has not made love a too ridiculous dream for us, remember this night.

"Now we must part, for it is late for a *tête-à-tête,* and it is the semblance of fidelity to my elderly protector that I am pledged to preserve."

So speaking, she took up a candle and vanished into the adjoining room, leaving Sallenauve in a state of mind that may be imagined after the surprises of every kind that this interview had brought him.

On returning to the hotel whither he had taken his things on arriving from Hanwell, he found Bricheteau waiting for him at the door.

"Where the devil have you been?" cried the organist, fran-

tic with impatience. "We might have got off by to-night's boat."

"Well, well," said Sallenauve carelessly, "I shall have a few more hours for playing truant."

"And meanwhile the enemy is pushing forward the mine!"

"What do I care? In that cave called political life must we not be prepared for whatever happens?"

"I suspected as much," said Bricheteau. "You have been to see la Luigia; her success has turned your head, and the statuary is breaking out through the Member."

"You yourself an hour since said Art alone is great."

"But the orator too is an artist," said Bricheteau, "and the greatest of all; for other artists appeal to the intellect and the feelings, he alone addresses the conscience and the will. Besides, this is not the time to look back; you have a duel to fight with your opponents. Are you a man of honor or a rogue who has stolen a name? That is the question which is perhaps being discussed and answered in your absence in the full light of the Chamber."

"I am sadly afraid that you have misled me; I had a jewel in my hands, and have flung it at my feet——"

"That," retorted the organist, "is happily a vapor that will vanish with the night. To-morrow you will remember your promises to your father and the splendid future that lies before you."

The Chambers were opened; Sallenauve had not been present at the royal sitting, and his absence had not failed to cause some sensation in the democratic party. At the office of the *National* especially there had been quite a commotion. It seemed only natural to expect that, as part owner of the paper and often to be seen at the office before the elections, having indeed contributed to its pages, he should, after being returned, have appeared there to get news when Parliament opened.

"Now he is elected," said some of the editors, commenting on the new member's total disappearance, "does my gentle-

man think he is going to play the snob? It is rather a common trick with our lords and masters in Parliament to pay us very obsequious court as long as they want supporters, and let us severely alone, like their old coats, as soon as they have climbed the tree. But we cannot allow this gentleman to play that game; there are more ways than one of turning the tables on a man."

The chief editor, less easily disturbed, had tried to soothe this first ebullition; but Sallenauve's non-appearance at the opening of the session had, nevertheless, struck him as strange.

On the following day, when the government officials were to be appointed—the presidents and secretaries—a business which is not unimportant, because it affords a means of estimating the majority, Sallenauve's absence was of more real consequence. In the office to which fate had attached him, the election of the head was carried by the Ministerialists by only one vote; thus the presence of the Member for Arcis would have turned the scale in favor of the Opposition. Hence the expression of strong disapproval in the organs of that party, explaining its defeat by this unforeseen defection, of which they spoke with some acrimonious surprise. They applied no epithets to the absentee's conduct, but they spoke of it as "quite inexplicable."

Maxime on his part kept a sharp lookout; he was only waiting till the official ranks of the Chamber should be filled to lay before the House, in the name of the Romilly peasant woman, a petition to prosecute. This document had been drawn up by Massol, and under his practised pen, the facts he had undertaken to set forth had assumed the air of probability which attorneys contrive to give to their statements and depositions even when furthest from the truth. And now, when Sallenauve's absence was so prolonged as to seem scandalous, he went once more to call on Rastignac; and availing himself of the ingenious plan of attack suggested by Desroches, he asked the Minister if he did not think that the moment had come when he, Rastignac, should abandon

the attitude of passive observation which he had hitherto chosen to maintain.

Rastignac was, in fact, far more explicit. Sallenauve in a foreign land figured in his mind as a man conscience-stricken, who had lost his balance. He therefore advised Monsieur de Trailles to bring forward the preliminaries of the action that very day, and no longer hesitated to promise his support for the success of a scheme which now looked so hopeful, and from which a very pretty scandal might reasonably be looked for.

The effects of this underground influence were obvious on the very next day. The order of the day in the Lower Chamber was the verification of the returns. The member whose duty it was to report on the election at Arcis-sur-Aube happened to be a trusty Ministerialist, and, acting on the private instructions that had reached him, he took this view of the case:—

The constituents of Arcis had elected their member according to law. Monsieur de Sallenauve had, in due course, submitted to the examining committee all the documents needed to prove his eligibility, and there was no apparent difficulty in the way of his taking his seat. But reports of a strange character had arisen, even at the time of the election, as to the new deputy's identification, and in further support of those rumors a petition had now been presented to the house to authorize a criminal prosecution. This petition set forth a very serious accusation: Monsieur de Sallenauve was said to have assumed the name he bore without any right, and this assumption being certified on an official document, was indictable as a forgery committed for the purpose of false personation. "A circumstance much to be regretted," the speaker went on, "was Monsieur de Sallenauve's absence; instead of appearing to contradict the extraordinary accusation lodged against him, he had remained absent from the sittings of the House ever since the opening of the session, and nobody had seen him. Under these circumstances could his election be officially ratified? The committee had thought not, and proposed that a delay should be granted."

Daniel d'Arthez, a member of the Legitimist Opposition, who, as we saw at Arcis, was in favor of Sallenauve's return, at once rose to address the Chamber, and begged to point out how completely out of order such a decision would be.

"The legality of the election was beyond dispute. No irregularity had been proved. Hence, the Chamber had no alternative; they must put the question to the vote, and recognize the election as regular and valid, since there was nothing to invalidate it. To confuse with that issue the question as to a petition to prosecute, would be an abuse of power, because, by hindering any preliminary discussion of that question, and relieving the indictment of the usual formalities before its acceptance or rejection, it would assume a singular and exceptional character—that, namely, of a suspension of the mandate granted to their member by the sovereign power of the electors. And who," added the orator, "can fail to perceive that by giving effect to this petition for authority to prosecute, in any form whatever, we prejudge its justification and importance; whereas the presumption of innocence, which is the prerogative of every accused person, ought to be especially extended to a man whose honesty has never been open to doubt, and who has so lately been honored by the suffrages of his fellow-citizens."

A prolonged discussion followed, the Ministerial speakers naturally taking the opposite view; then a difficulty arose. The President for the time being, in right of seniority—for the Chamber had not yet elected its chief—was a weary old man, who, in the complicated functions so suddenly conferred on him by his register of birth, was not always prompt and competent. Sallenauve's application for leave of absence had reached him the day before; and if it had occurred to him to announce it to the Chamber at the beginning of the sitting—as he ought to have done—the discussion would probably have been nipped in the bud. But there is luck and ill-luck in parliamentary business; and when the House learned from this letter, at last communicated, that Charles de Sallenauve was abroad, and had no ground to offer for

this application for unlimited leave but the vague commonplace of "urgent private affairs," the effect was disastrous.

"It is self-evident," said all the Ministerialists, like Rastignac, "he is in England, where every form of failure takes refuge. He is afraid of the inquiry; he knows he will be unmasked."

This opinion, apart from all the political feeling, was shared by some of the sterner spirits, who could not conceive that a man should not appear to defend himself against so gross an accusation. In short, after a very strong and skilful speech from Vinet the public prosecutor, who had found courage in the absence of the accused, the confirmation of the election was postponed, though by a very small majority; at the same time, a week's leave of absence was voted to the accused member.

On the day after these proceedings, Maxime wrote as follows to Madame Beauvisage:—

"Madame,—The enemy met with a terrible reverse yesterday; and in the opinion of my friend Rastignac, a very experienced and intelligent judge of parliamentary feeling, Dorlange, whatever happens, cannot recover from the blow thus dealt him. If we should fail to procure any positive proof in support of our worthy countrywoman's charge, it is possible that the scoundrel, by sheer audacity, may finally be accepted by the Chamber, if, indeed, he dares show his face in France. But even then, after dragging on a sordid existence utterly unrecognized, he will inevitably ere long be driven to resign; then M. Beauvisage will be elected beyond doubt, for the constituency, ashamed of having been taken in by an adventurer, will be only too happy to reinstate themselves by a choice that will do them honor, besides having been their first instinctive selection.

"This result, madame, will be due to your remarkable sagacity; for, but for the sort of second sight which enabled you to divine the precious truth hidden under the peasant-woman's story, we should have overlooked that valuable in-

strument. I may tell you, madame, even if it should inflate your pride, that neither Rastignac nor Vinet, the public prosecutor, understood the full importance of your discovery; indeed, I myself, if I had not been so happy as to know you, so as to be able to appreciate the value attaching to any idea of yours, might very probably have shared the indifference of these two statesmen as to the useful weapon you were putting into our hands. But, as the gift came from you, I at once understood its importance; and while pointing out to Rastignac the means of utilizing it, I succeeded in making my friend the Minister an eager partner in the plot, and, at the same time, a sincere admirer of the skill and perspicacity of which you had given proof.

"Thus, madame, if I should ever be so happy as to be connected with you by the bond of which we have already spoken, I shall not need to initiate you into political life; you have found the path so well unaided.

"Nothing new can happen within the next week, the length of leave granted to our man. If after that date the absentee does not appear, there is, I think, no doubt that the election will be pronounced null and void; for yesterday's vote, which you will have read in the papers, is a positive summons to him to appear in his place. You may be very sure that between this and his return—if he should return—I shall not fail to devote myself to fomenting the antagonistic feeling of the Chamber both by the press and by private communications. Rastignac has also issued orders to this end, and it is safe to conclude that the foe will find public opinion strongly prejudiced against him.

"Allow me, madame, to beg you to remember me to Mademoiselle Cécile, and accept for yourself and Monsieur Beauvisage the expression of my most respectful regard."

A few words of instruction to the Ministerial press had, in fact, begun to surround the name of Sallenauve with a sort of atmosphere of disrespect and ridicule; the most insulting innuendoes ascribed to his absence the sense of a retreat from

his foes. The effect of these repeated attacks was all the more inevitable because Sallenauve was but feebly defended by the politicians of his own party.

Nor was this lukewarm feeling at all surprising. Not knowing how to account for his conduct, the Opposition papers, while they felt it their duty to defend him, were afraid of saying too much in favor of a man whose future grew more doubtful every day; for might he not at any moment give the lie to the certificate of high morals which had been so rashly given?

On the day when his week's leave ended, Sallenauve, not having yet returned, a second-rate Ministerial paper published, under the heading of "Lost, a deputy!" an insolent and witty article which made a considerable sensation.

That evening Madame de l'Estorade called on Madame de Camps, and found her alone with her husband. She was greatly excited, and exclaimed as she went in:

"Have you read that infamous article?"

"No," said Madame de Camps. "But my husband has told me about it; it is really disgraceful that the Ministry should order, or at least encourage, anything so atrocious."

"I am half crazed by it," said Madame de l'Estorade, "for it is all our doing."

"That is carrying conscientious scruples too far," said Madame de Camps.

"Not at all," said the ironmaster. "I agree with madame. All the venom of this attack would be dispersed by a single step on l'Estorade's part; and by refusing to take it, if he is not the originator, he is at least the abettor of the scandal."

"Then you have told him——?" asked the Countess reproachfully.

"Why, my dear," replied Madame Octave, "though we have our little women's secrets, I could not but explain to my husband what had given rise to the sort of monomania that possesses Monsieur de l'Estorade. It would have been such a distrust of my second self as would have hurt him deeply; and such explanations as I felt bound to give him

have not, I think, made me a faithless depositary of any secret that concerns you personally."

"Ah, you are a happy couple!" said Madame de l'Estorade, with a sigh. "However, I am not sorry that Monsieur de Camps should have been admitted to our confidence; the point is, to find some way out of the difficult position in which I am struggling, and two opinions are better than one."

"Why, what has happened?" asked Madame de Camps.

"My husband's head is quite turned," replied the Countess. "He seems to me to have lost every trace of moral sense. Far from perceiving that he is, as Monsieur de Camps said just now, the abettor of the odious contest now going on, without having—as those who had started it—the excuse of ignorance, he seems to exult in it. He brought me that detestable paper with an air of triumph, and I found him quite ready to take offence because I did not agree with him in thinking it most amusing and witty."

"That letter," said Madame Octave, "was a terrible blow to him; it hit him body and soul at once."

"That I grant," cried the ironmaster. "But deuce take it! If you are a man, you take a lunatic's words for what they are worth."

"Still, it is very strange," said his wife, "that Monsieur de Sallenauve does not come back; for, after all, that Jacques Bricheteau to whom you gave his address must have written to him."

"What is to be done!" exclaimed the Countess. "There has been a fatality over the whole business. To-morrow the question is to be discussed in the Chamber as to whether or no Monsieur de Sallenauve's election is to be ratified; and if he should not then be in his place, the Ministry hopes to be able to annul it."

"But it really is atrocious!" said Monsieur de Camps; "and though my position hardly justifies me in taking such a step, a very little would make me go straight to the President of the Chamber and tell him a few home truths——"

"I would have begged you to do so, I think, even at the risk of my husband's detecting my intervention, but for one consideration—it would distress Monsieur de Sallenauve so greatly that his friend's unhappy state should be made public."

"Certainly," said Madame Octave. "Such a line of defence would evidently be contrary to his intentions; and, after all, he may yet arrive in time. Besides, the decision of the Chamber still remains problematical, while, Monsieur Marie-Gaston's madness once known, he can never get over the blow."

"And then," added Madame de l'Estorade, "all the odious part that my husband has taken so far in this dreadful business is as nothing in comparison with a really diabolical idea which he communicated to me just now before dinner."

"What can that be?" asked Madame de Camps anxiously.

"His idea is that to-morrow I am to go with him to the gallery reserved for the peers to hear the question discussed."

"Really, he is losing his wits!" said Monsieur de Camps. "It is quite like Diafoirus the younger, who offers his bride elect the diversion of seeing a dissection——"

Madame de Camps shook her head meaningly at her husband, as much as to say, "Do not pour oil on the flames." She merely asked the Countess if she had not shown Monsieur de l'Estorade how monstrous such a proceeding would appear.

"At the very first word I spoke to that effect, he flew into a rage," said Madame de l'Estorade, "telling me that I was apparently only too glad to perpetuate a belief in our intimacy with *this man,* since, on an opportunity when I could so naturally proclaim our rupture to the public I so resolutely declined it."

"Well, then, my dear, you must go," said Madame Octave, "Domestic peace before all things. Besides, after all, your presence at the sitting may equally well be regarded as a proof of kindly interest."

"For fifteen years," said the ironmaster, "you have reigned

and ruled at home, and this is a revolution which seriously shifts the focus of power."

"But, monsieur, I beg you to believe that I should never have made such use of the sovereignty, which indeed I have always tried to conceal."

"Do I not know it?" replied Monsieur de Camps warmly, as he took Madame de l'Estorade's hands in his own. "But I agree with my wife—this cup must be drained."

"I shall die of shame as I listen to the infamous charges the Ministerial party will bring! I shall feel as if they were murdering a man under my own eyes, whom I could save by merely putting my hand out—and I cannot do it——"

"Yes, it is so," said Monsieur de Camps. "And a man, too, who has done you signal service; but would you rather bring hell into your house, and aggravate your husband's unhealthy state?"

"Listen, my dear," said Madame de Camps. "Tell Monsieur de l'Estorade that I also wish to go to this sitting; that it will give less cause for comment if you are seen there with a person who is uninterested and merely curious; and on that point do not give way. Then, at any rate, I shall be there to keep your head straight on your shoulders and preserve you from yourself."

"I should not have dared to ask it of you," replied Madame de l'Estorade, "for one does not like to ask any one to assist in evil-doing; but since you are so generous as to offer it, I feel I am a degree less wretched.—Now, good-night, for my husband must not find me out when he comes in. He was to dine with Monsieur de Rastignac, and no doubt they have plotted great things for to-morrow."

"Go then; and in an hour or so I will send you a note, as though I had not seen you, to ask if you have any power to admit me to the Chamber to-morrow, as the meeting promises to be interesting."

"Oh! To be brought so low as to plot and contrive——" said Madame de l'Estorade, embracing her friend.

"My dear child," replied Madame de Camps, "it is said

that the life of the Christian is a warfare; but that of a woman married to a certain type of man is a pitched battle. Be patient and take courage."

And so the friends parted.

At about two o'clock on the following day Madame de l'Estorade, with her husband and Madame de Camps, took her seat in the peers' gallery; she looked ill, and returned the bows that greeted her from various parts of the House with cool indifference. Madame de Camps, who had never before found herself in the parliamentary Chamber, made two observations: In the first place, she exclaimed at the slovenly appearance of so many of the honorable members; and then she was struck by the number of bald heads which, as she looked down on them from the gallery that gave her a bird's-eye view of the assembly, surprised her greatly.

She then listened while Monsieur de l'Estorade named the notabilities present; first all the bigwigs, who need not be mentioned here, since their names dwell in everybody's memory; then Canalis, the poet, who had, she thought, an Olympian air; d'Arthez, whose modest demeanor greatly attracted her; Vinet, who, as she said, was like a viper in spectacles; Victorin Hulot, one of the orators of the Left Centre. It was some little time before she could get accustomed to the hum of conversation all round her, comparing it to the noise of a swarm of bees buzzing about a hive. But what chiefly amazed her was the general aspect of the assembly; the strange free-and-easiness and total absence of dignity did not in the least suggest that it was representative of a great nation.

It was written by the finger of fate that Madame de l'Estorade should be spared no form of annoyance. Just as the sitting was about to open, the Marquise d'Espard, escorted by Monsieur de Ronquerolles, came into the gallery, and took a seat close to her. Though they met in society, the two women could not endure each other. Madame de l'Estorade scorned the spirit of intrigue, the total want of principle, and

the spiteful, bitter temper which the Marquise concealed under the most elegant manners; while Madame d'Espard had even deeper contempt for what she called the "pot-boiling" virtues of the Countess. It must be added that Madame de l'Estorade was two-and-thirty, and of a type of beauty that time had spared; while Madame d'Espard was forty-four, and in spite of the arts of the toilet, her looks were altogether past.

"Do you often come here?" she said to the Countess, after a few indispensable civilities as to the pleasure of meeting her.

"Never," said Madame de l'Estorade.

"I am a constant visitor," said Madame d'Espard.

Then, with the air of making a discovery:

"To be sure," she added, "you have a special interest in the meeting to-day. Some one you know, I believe, is on his trial."

"Yes, Monsieur de Sallenauve has visited at my house."

"It is most distressing," said the Marquise, "to see a man who, as Monsieur de Ronquerolles assures me, was quite a hero in his way thus called to account by the police."

"His chief crime, so far, is his absence," said the Countess drily.

"And he is consumed by ambition, it would seem," Madame d'Espard went on. "Before this attempt to get into Parliament he had matrimonial projects, as you no doubt know, and had tried to marry into the Lanty family—a scheme which, so far as the handsome heiress was concerned, ended in her retirement to a convent."

Madame de l'Estorade was not astonished to find that this story, which Sallenauve had believed to be a perfect secret, was known to the Marquise; she was one of the best-informed women in Paris. An old Academician had called her drawing-room, in mythological parlance, "The Temple of Fame."

"They are about to begin, I think," said the Countess, who, always expecting to feel Madame d'Espard's claws, was not sorry to close the conversation.

The President had in fact rung his bell, the members were settling into their places, the curtain was about to rise.

To give the reader a faithful account of the sitting, we think it will be at once more exact and more convenient to copy the report as printed in one of the papers of the day.

CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

MONSIEUR COINTET (Vice President) in the Chair.

May 23rd.

The President took the chair at two o'clock.

On the Ministers' bench were the Keeper of the Seals, the Minister of the Interior, and the Minister of Public Works.

The report of the last meeting was read and passed.

The order of the day was to discuss the validity of the election of the member returned by the borough of Arcis-sur-Aube.

The President—The representative of the Commission of Inquiry will read his report.

The Reporter—Gentlemen, the strange and unsatisfactory position in which Monsieur de Sallenauve has thought proper to place himself has not ended as we had reason to hope. Monsieur de Sallenauve's leave of absence expired yesterday, and he still remains away from the sittings of the Chamber; nor has any letter from him applying for further extension reached the President's hands. This indifference as to the functions which Monsieur de Sallenauve had sought, it would seem, with unusual eagerness (murmurs from the Left), would under any circumstances be a serious defection; but when it is coupled with the prosecution now threatened, does it not assume a character highly damaging to his reputation? (Murmurs from the Left. Applause from the Centre.) Your Commissioners, compelled to seek the solution of a question which may be said to be unexampled in parliamentary annals, when considering the steps to be taken, were divided by two opposite opinions. The minority, of

which I am the sole representative—the Commissioners being but three—thought that a plan should be laid before you which I may call radical in its character, and which aims at settling the difficulty by submitting it to its natural judges. Annul M. de Sallenauve's election *hic et nunc,* and send him back to the constituency which returned him, and of which he is so faithless a representative: this is the first alternative I have to offer you. (Excitement on the Left.) The majority, on the contrary, pronounced that the electors' vote must be absolutely respected, and the shortcomings of a man honored by their confidence must be overlooked to the utmost limits of patience and indulgence. Consequently, the Commission requires me to propose that you should officially extend M. de Sallenauve's leave of absence to a fortnight from this date—(murmurs from the Centre. "Hear, hear," from the Left)—with the full understanding that if by the end of that time M. de Sallenauve has given no sign of life, he is to be regarded as simply having resigned his seat without entangling this House in any irritating and useless discussion of the matter. (Excitement on all sides.)

M. le Colonel Franchessini, who, during the reading of the report, had been engaged in earnest conversation with the Minister of Public Works on the Ministers' bench, anxiously begged to be heard.

The President—M. de Canalis wishes to speak.

M. de Canalis—Gentlemen, M. de Sallenauve is one of those bold men who, like me, believe that politics are not a forbidden fruit to any intelligent mind; but that the stuff of which a statesman is made may be found in a poet or an artist quite as much as in a lawyer, an official, a doctor, or a land-owner. In virtue, then, of our common origin, M. de Sallenauve has my fullest sympathy, and no one will be surprised to see me mount this tribune to support the recommendation of the Commission. Still, I cannot agree to their final decision; for the idea of our colleague being regarded, by the mere fact of his prolonged absence beyond the limit of leave, as having resigned his seat, is repugnant both to my

conscience and my reason. You have heard it remarked that M. de Sallenauve's carelessness as to his duties is all the less excusable because he lies under a serious charge; but, supposing, gentlemen, that this charge were the actuating cause of his absence. (Laughter from the Centre.) Allow me—I am not so guileless as the laughers seem to fancy. It is my good fortune, by nature, that base suggestions do not occur to me; and that M. de Sallenauve, with the high position he had achieved as an artist, should plot to take his seat in this Chamber by means of a crime, is a theory I refuse to admit. Two foul spiders are ever ready to spin their web about a man with such a stain on his birth—Chicanery and Intrigue. But I, far from admitting that he would have fled before the charge brought against him, I say, suppose that at this moment, abroad, he were collecting the evidence for his defence? ("Hear, hear; well said!" from the Left.) In this belief,—a very plausible one, as it seems to me—far from being justified in requiring a strict account of his absence, ought we not rather to regard it as a proof of respect for this House, as feeling himself unworthy to take his place in it till he was in a position to defy his accusers?

A Voice—Ten years' leave of absence, like Telemachus, to look for his father. (General laughter.)

M. de Canalis—I did not expect so romantic an interruption! But since we are referred to the Odyssey, I may remind you that Ulysses, after suffering every outrage, at last drew his bow, very much to the discomfiture of the suitors. (Loud murmurs from the Centre.) I vote for a fortnight's further leave, and a reopening of the question at the end of that time.

M. le Colonel Franchessini—I do not know whether the last speaker intended to intimidate the Chamber; for my part, such arguments affect me very little, and I am always prepared to return them to those who utter them. ("Order, order," from the Left.)

M. le Président—No personalities, Colonel.

M. le Colonel Franchessini—At the same time, I am so far of the same opinion as the last speaker that I do not be-

lieve that the delinquent has fled from the charge brought against him. Neither that accusation, nor the effect it may have on your minds or on others, nor even the annulling of his election, has any interest for him at present. Do you wish to know what M. de Sallenauve is doing in England? Then read the English papers. They have for some days been full of the praises of a prima donna who has just come out at Her Majesty's Theatre. (Groans and interruptions.)

A Voice—Such gossip is unworthy of this House.

M. le Colonel Franchessini—Gentlemen, I am more accustomed to the blunt speech of camps than to the proprieties of the Chamber; I am perhaps rash in thinking aloud. The honorable gentleman who spoke last said that he believed that M. de Sallenauve had gone in search of evidence for his defence. I say—not I believe, but I know, that a wealthy foreigner has extended his protection to a handsome Italian who was formerly honored by that of our colleague Phidias. (Fresh interruptions. "Order, order; this is not to be allowed!")

A Voice—Monsieur le Président, will you not silence this speaker?"

Colonel Franchessini, folding his arms, waited till silence should be restored.

M. le Président—I must request the speaker to adhere to the question.

M. le Colonel Franchessini—I have never deviated from it; however, as the Chamber refuses to hear me, I can but say that I vote with the minority. It seems to me a very natural course to send Monsieur de Sallenauve back to his constituency, and to ascertain whether they meant to elect a deputy or a lover. ("Order, order!" A great commotion; excitement at the highest pitch.)

M. de Canalis hastily tried to mount the tribune.

M. le Président—The Minister of Public Works wishes to speak, and as one of the King's Ministry, he has always a right to be heard.

M. de Rastignac—It is no fault of mine, gentlemen, that

you have not been saved from this scandal in the Chamber. I tried, out of regard for my old friendship with Colonel Franchessini, to persuade him not to speak on so delicate a matter, since his inexperience of parliamentary rule, aggravated by his ready wit and fluency, might betray him into some regrettable extravagance. It was to this effect that I advised him in the course of the short conversation we held at my seat before he addressed the House; and I myself asked to be heard after him expressly to correct any idea of my collusion in the indiscretion he has committed—in my opinion —by descending to the confidential details he has thought proper to trouble you with. However, as against my intention, and so to say, against my will, I have mounted the tribune, though no ministerial interest detains me here, may I be allowed to make a few brief remarks? ("Speak, speak!" from the Centre.)

The Minister of Public Works proceeded to show that the absent member's conduct was characterized by marked contempt for the Chamber. He had treated it with cavalier indifference. He had indeed asked leave of absence; but how? By writing from abroad. That is to say, he first took leave, and then asked for it. Had he, as was customary, assigned any reason for the request? Not at all. He simply announced that he was compelled to be absent on urgent private business, a trumpery pretext which might at any time reduce the assembly by half its members. But supposing that M. de Sallenauve's business were really urgent, and that it were of a nature which he thought it undesirable to explain in a letter to be made public, why could he not have laid it in confidence before the President, or even have requested one of his friends of such standing as would secure credit for his mere word, to answer for the necessity for his absence without any detailed explanation?

At this moment the Minister was interrupted by a bustle in the passage to the right; several of the members left their places; others standing on the seats and craning their necks were looking at something. The Minister, after turning to

the President, to whom he seemed to appeal for an explanation, went down from the tribune and returned to his seat, when he was immediately surrounded by a number of deputies from the Centre, among whom M. Vinet was conspicuous by his gesticulations. Other groups formed in the arena; in fact, the sitting was practically suspended.

In a few minutes the President rang his bell.

The ushers—Take your seats, gentlemen.

The members hastily returned to their places.

M. le Président—M. de Sallenauve will now speak.

M. de Sallenauve, who had been talking to M. d'Arthez and M. de Canalis since his arrival had suspended business, went up to the tribune. His manner was modest, but quite free from embarrassment. Everybody was struck by his resemblance to one of the most fiery of the revolutionary orators.

A Voice—Danton minus the smallpox.

M. de Sallenauve (deep silence)—Gentlemen, I am under no illusion as to my personal importance, and do not imagine that I myself am the object of a form of persecution, which would rather seem to be directed against the opinions I have the honor to represent. However that may be, my election seems to have assumed some importance in the eyes of the Ministry. To contest it, a special agent and special press writers were sent to Arcis; and a humble servant of the Government, whose salary, after twenty years of honorable service, had reached the figure of fifteen hundred francs a year, was suddenly dismissed from his post for being guilty of contributing to my success. (Loud murmurs from the Centre.) I can only thank the gentlemen who are interrupting me, for I suppose their noisy disapprobation is meant for this singular dismissal, and not to convey a doubt of the fact, which is beyond all question. (Laughter from the Left.) So far as I am concerned, as I could not be turned out, I have been attacked with another weapon; judicial calumny combined with my opportune absence——

The Minister of Public Works—It was the Ministry evidently that procured your extradition to England?

M. de Sallenauve—No, Monsieur le Ministre, I do not ascribe my absence either to your influence or to your suggestions; it was an act of imperative duty, and the result of no one's bidding; but as regards your share in the public accusations brought against me, I shall proceed to lay the facts before this assembly, and leave the matter to their judgment. (A stir of interest.) The law which, in order to protect the independence of a member of this Chamber, lays down the rule that a criminal prosecution cannot be instituted against any member without the preliminary authority of the Chamber, has been turned against me, I must say with consummate skill. The indictment, if presented to the Attorney-General in Court, would have been at once dismissed, for it stands alone without the support of any kind of proof; and, so far as I know, the Ministry of this nation is not in the habit of prosecuting anybody on the strength of the allegation of the first comer. I cannot, therefore, but admire the remarkable acumen which discerned that by appealing to this Chamber, the charge would have all the advantages of a political attack, though it had not the elements of the simplest criminal case. (Murmurs.) And then, gentlemen, who is the skilful parliamentary campaigner to be credited with this masterly device? As you know, it is a woman, a peasant, claiming only the humble rank of a hand-worker; whence we must infer that the countrywomen of Champagne can boast of an intellectual superiority of which hitherto you can surely have had no conception. (Laughter.) It must, however, be added that before setting out for Paris to state her grievance, my accuser would seem to have had an interview, which may have thrown some light on her mind, with the Mayor of Arcis, my ministerial opponent for election; and it is furthermore to be supposed that this magistrate had some interest in the prosecution to be instituted, since he thought it his duty to pay the traveling expenses both of the plaintiff and of the village lawyer who accompanied her. ("Ha-ha!" from the Left.) This remarkably clever woman having come to Paris, on whom does she first call? Well, on that very gentleman who had been sent to Arcis by the Government as a special agent

to insure the success of the ministerial candidate. And who then made it his business to apply for authority to prosecute? Not indeed that same special agent, but a lawyer directed by him, after a breakfast to which the peasant woman and her rustic adviser were invited, to supply the necessary grounds. (Much excitement and a long buzz of talk.)

The Minister of Public Works, from his bench—Without discussing the truth of facts of which I personally have no knowledge, I may state on my honor that the Government was absolutely unaware of all the intrigues described, and repudiates and blames them in unqualified terms.

M. de Sallenauve—After the express denial which I have been so fortunate as to elicit, I feel, gentlemen, that it would be ungracious to insist on foisting on the Government the responsibility for these proceedings; but that I should have made the mistake will seem to you quite natural if you remember that at the moment when I entered this hall the Minister for Public Works was speaking from the tribune and taking part in a very unusual way in a discussion bearing on the rules of this Chamber, while trying to convince you that I had treated its members with irreverent contumely.

The Minister for Public Works made some remark which was not heard; there was a long burst of private discussion.

M. Victorin Hulot—I would beg the President to desire the Minister for Public Works not to interrupt. He will have the opportunity of replying.

M. de Sallenauve—According to M. de Rastignac, I failed in respect to this Chamber by applying from abroad for the leave of absence which I had already taken before obtaining the permission I affected to ask. But, in his anxiety to prove me in the wrong, the Minister overlooks the fact that at the time when I set out the session had not begun, and that by addressing such a request to the President of the Chamber I should have appealed to a pure abstraction. ("Quite true," from the Left.) As to the inadequacy of the reasons assigned for my absence, I regret to say that I was unable to be more explicit; that if I should reveal the true cause of my journey, I should betray a secret that is not mine. At the same time I was

fully aware that by this reserve—which I must even now maintain—I exposed my actions to monstrous misinterpretation, and might expect to see a mixture of the burlesque and the offensive in the explanations that would be given as a substitute for the facts. (Excitement.) In reality, I was so anxious not to pretermit any of the formalities required by my position, that I, like the Minister himself, had thought of the arrangement by which I fancied I had put everything in order. A man of the highest honor, and, like myself, in possession of the secret that compelled me to travel, had been requested by me to guarantee to the President of this Chamber the imperative necessity to which I had yielded. But calumny had, no doubt, so far done its work that this honorable gentleman feared to compromise himself by affording the signal protection of his name and word to a man threatened with a criminal action. Although at this moment danger seems to be receding from me, I shall not destroy the incognito in which he has thought it proper and wise to shroud his defection. The less I was prepared for this egotistic prudence, the more have I the right to be surprised and pained by it; but the more careful shall I be to let this breach of friendship remain a secret between myself and his conscience, which alone will blame him.

At this stage there was a great commotion in the gallery reserved for the Peers of the Upper House, everybody crowding to help a lady who had a violent attack of hysterics. Several members hurried to the spot, and some, doctors no doubt, left the Chamber in haste. The sitting was interrupted for some minutes.

The President—Ushers, open the ventilators. It is want of air that has led to this unfortunate incident. M. de Sallenauve, be so good as to go on with your speech.

M. de Sallenauve—To resume, briefly: The application for authority to prosecute, of which you have heard, has now, no doubt, lost much of its importance in the eyes of my colleagues, even of the more hostile. I have here a letter in which the peasant-woman, my relation, withdraws her charge and confirms the statements I have had the honor of laying

before you. I might read the letter, but I think it better simply to place it in the President's hands. ("Quite right, quite right!") As regards the illegality of my absence, I returned to Paris this morning; and by being in my place at the opening of this sitting, I could have been in my seat in Parliament within the strict limits of the time so generously granted me by this Chamber. But, as M. de Canalis suggested to you, I was determined not to appear here till the cloud that hung over my character could be cleared off. This task filled up the morning.—Now, gentlemen, it is for you to decide whether one of your colleagues is to be sent back to his constituents, for a few hours' delay in coming to claim his seat in this Chamber. After all, whether I am to be regarded as a forger, a desperate lover, or merely as a careless representative, I am not uneasy as to what their verdict will be; and after the lapse of a few weeks, the probable result, as I believe, will be that I shall come back again.

On all sides cries of "Divide."

On descending from the tribune, M. de Sallenauve was warmly congratulated.

The President—I put it to the vote: Whether or no the election of M. de Sallenauve, returned as Member for Arcis, is or is not valid?

Almost every member present rose to vote in favor of the admission of the new member; a few deputies of the Centre abstained from voting on either side.

M. de Sallenauve was admitted and took the oaths.

M. le Président—The order of the day includes the first reading of the Address, but the Chairman of the Committee informs me that the draft will not be ready to be laid before this Chamber till to-morrow. Business being done, I pronounce the sitting closed.

The Chamber rose at half-past four.

NOTE.—Balzac left "The Member for Arcis" unfinished. See introduction.
J. W. M.